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BRITAIN'S BESTSELLING FAMILY HISTORY MAGAZINE

ISSUE 225 CHRISTMAS 2024 £5.75

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SECOND WORLD WAR

British Army service records go online

I uncovered an early campaigner for women's rights in my tree

SOUND AND FILM

The online archives that will transform your research

THE BATTLE OF ARNHEM

Al Murray talks about his latest book

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Welcome

Sarah's Top Tip

When someone 'disappears' from the records, the solution may be simple

BIG QUESTION
When was missing Grace Dale born?
I think James and Jane Dale had a change of heart about naming their daughter

I loved the way that our 'Q&A' expert Antony Marr solved Carol Griffiths' mystery this month (**page 45**). Carol was searching for Grace Dale, who seemed to have disappeared from the records at an early age. With a bit of sleuthing and careful reading of records, Antony worked out that Grace didn't disappear – her parents just chose to change her name to Annie. Perhaps, at just 11 days old, it was too soon for them to have settled on a name when the enumerator knocked on their door. Either way, it's a good reminder to keep an open mind when searching for our forebears.

As family historians, we spend a lot of our time trawling through census records. In fact, they are one of my favourite collections. So it was a real pleasure for me to spend a few days testing the main providers of genealogical records to see how their census offerings compare (see **page 18**). It was quite an eye-opener and a reminder, if I needed one, that if you can't find someone in the census, it might be worth looking at a different provider to see if their index can flush out your hidden forebear.

We also caught up with comedian Al Murray to talk about his fascination with the Second World War, which has led to both a hugely popular podcast and a new book about Arnhem (**page 14**). And on **page 28** we have an article by Simon Wills, a much-loved contributor to this magazine who passed away in October. His piece about Ancestry's new RNLI collection honours his memory.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who took part in our annual Transcription Tuesday event. I realise that there were a few technical hitches on the day and many of you found the Irish parish registers tricky to read, but to have transcribed more than 28,000 records is astonishing and a great way to give back to family history – it is the season for giving, after all. May I wish you all a Merry Christmas!

Sarah

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Contributors

Al Murray
Al is a comedian who is best known for his comic persona 'The Pub Landlord', but he has a burning passion for Second World War military history. We talk to him on **page 14**.

Nicola Morris
Irish genealogist Nicola regularly contributes to the research for the *WDYTYA?* TV series. This month she shares her expert tips for using Irish National Schools' records (**page 38**).

Caroline Roope
Caroline is a writer and researcher specialising in social history, who on **page 52** also dips her toe into folklore and legend to reveal the origins of beloved Christmas traditions.

COVER IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES/A MEMBER OF THE AUXILIARY TERRITORIAL SERVICE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR KISSES A SOLDIER UNDER THE MISTLETOE AS THEY PREPARE THEIR DEPOT FOR CHRISTMAS

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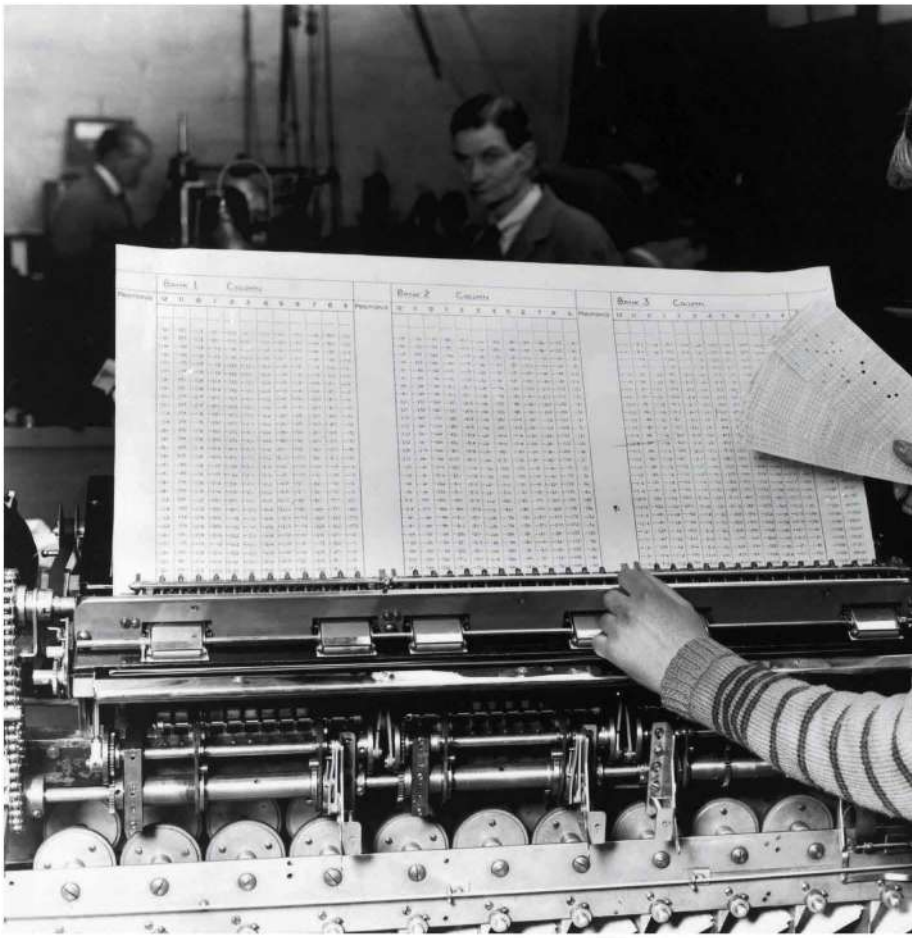

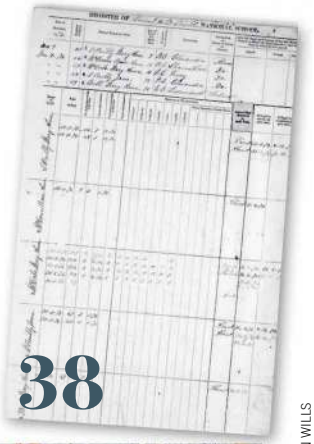

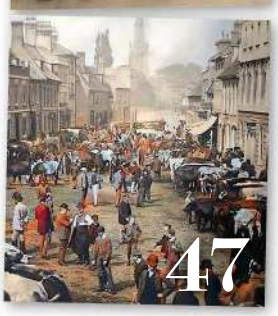

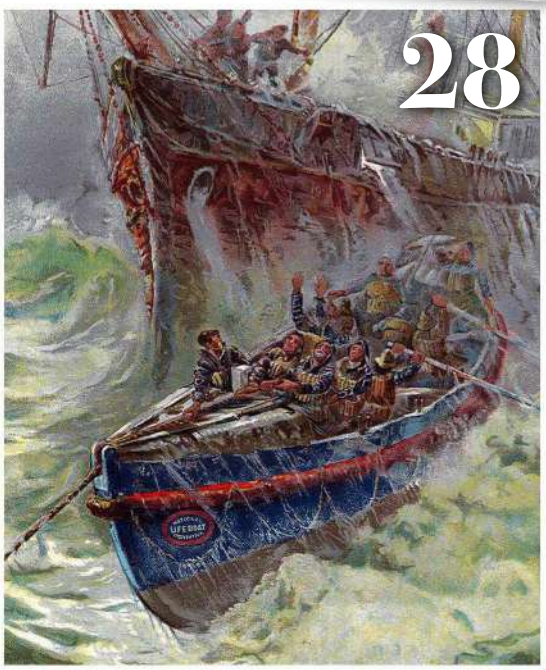

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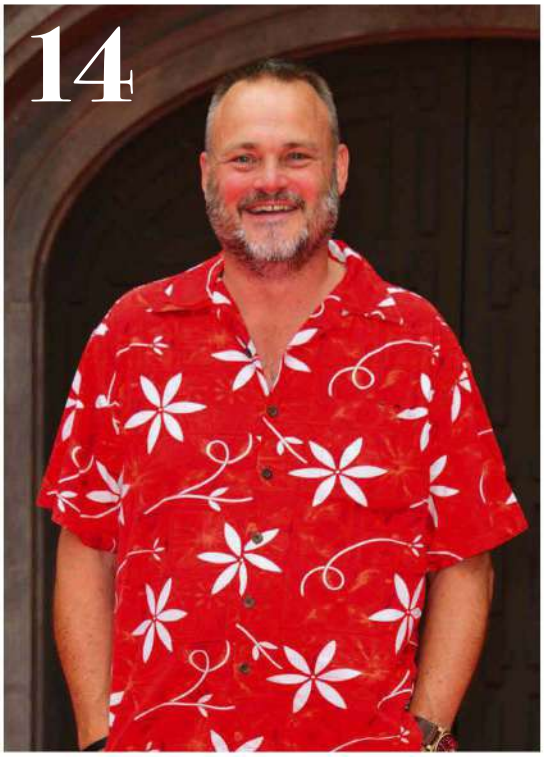

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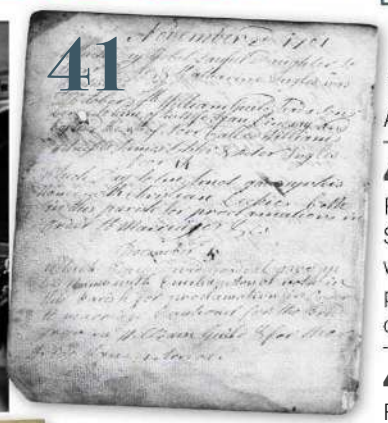

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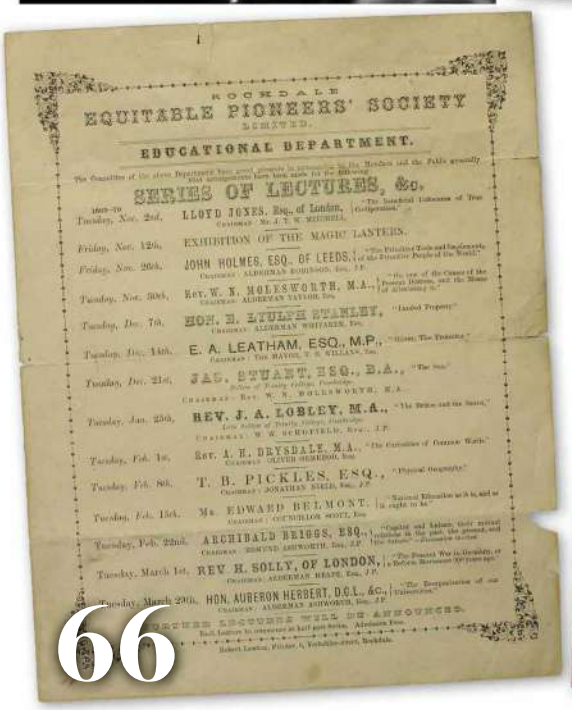
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Friday, Nov. 12th, EXHIBITION OF THE MAGIC LANTERN.
Friday, Nov. 26th, JOHN HOLMES, ESQ., OF LEEDS,
Tuesday, Dec. 7th, HON. E. LYULPH STANLEY,
Tuesday, Dec. 14th, E. A. LEATHAM, ESQ., M.P.,
Tuesday, Dec. 21st, JAS. STUART, ESQ., B.A.,
Tuesday, Jan. 25th, REV. J. A. LOBLEY, M.A.,
Tuesday, Feb. 1st, Rev. A. H. DEYSDALE, M.A.,
Tuesday, Feb. 8th, T. B. PICKLES, ESQ.,
Tuesday, Feb. 15th, Mr. EDWARD BELMONT,
Tuesday, Feb. 22nd, ARCHIBALD BRIGGS, ESQ.,
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Newspaper Revelations

STAR LETTER

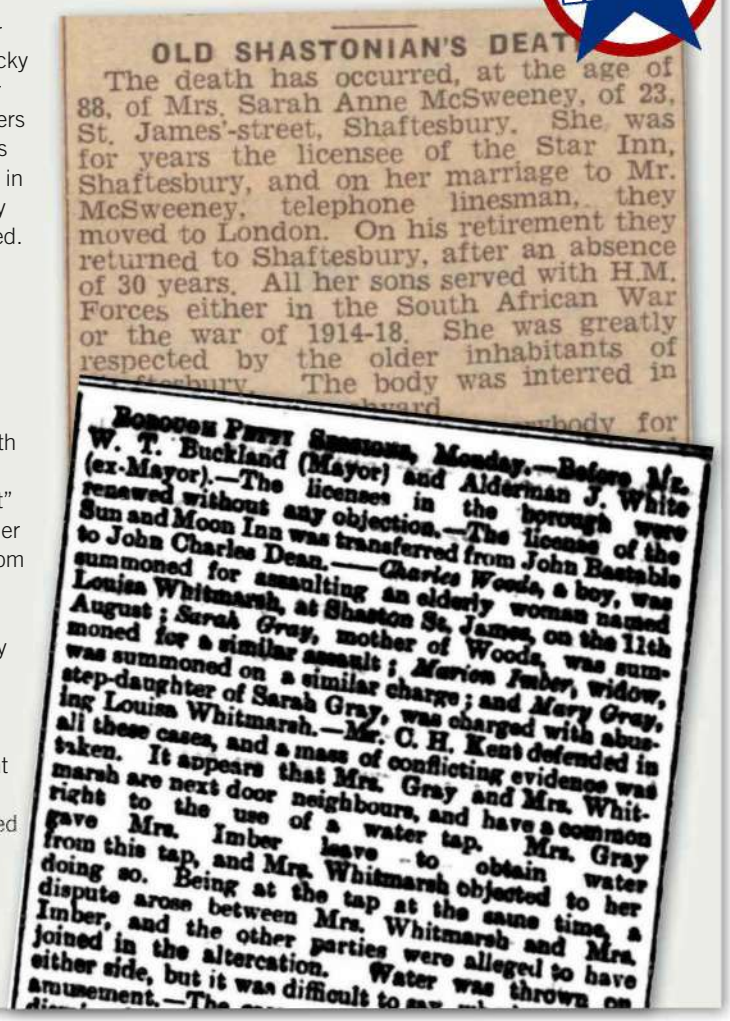
I could not agree more with Chloe O'Shea's article in the November issue about the value of online newspaper archives. I have been lucky that one side of the family has stayed in the town of Shaftesbury for many generations, and there are many pages of digitised newspapers where I have been able to find mentions, including announcements of births, marriages and deaths, petty-court sessions, appearances in local theatre productions, and winners of parish competitions. They all add to forming a great picture of our ancestors and how they lived.

In particular, newspapers have been helpful for researching the life of my great great grandmother Sarah Ann Oxford/Woods/Gray/McSweeney. I've uncovered a report of when she successfully took John Woods, her future husband, to the borough court for maintenance of her first illegitimate child, plus a subsequent marriage notice and, five years later, sad news of his death. Then there's a great article about an appearance at the petty sessions with her sons for a water fight over the use of a tap – "Water was thrown on either side, but it was difficult to say who began this amusement" – plus a petty-sessions notice for taking the licence of an inn with her second husband, and subsequent reports of drunken behaviour from her premises. I had no idea where she was after the 1911 census until I found her obituary, where it mentions how Sarah and her (third) husband had "moved to London, and on his retirement, they returned to Shaftesbury, after an absence of 30 years".

All these little glimpses of our ancestors' lives between the usual genealogical records such as the census bring these characters to life. Even if you don't find your forebear's name, reading about what was going on in their town or village helps to form a picture.

Thanks to you and your team for a great magazine, as always filled with such great advice and new avenues for research.

Kathryn Cane, by email



OLD SHASTONIAN'S DEAT

The death has occurred, at the age of 88, of Mrs. Sarah Anne McSweeney, of 23, St. James'-street, Shaftesbury. She was for years the licensee of the Star Inn, Shaftesbury, and on her marriage to Mr. McSweeney, telephone linesman, they moved to London. On his retirement they returned to Shaftesbury, after an absence of 30 years. All her sons served with H.M. Forces either in the South African War or the war of 1914-18. She was greatly respected by the older inhabitants of The body was interred in

Borough Petty Sessions, Monday.—Before Mr. W. T. Buckland (Mayor) and Alderman J. White (ex-Mayor).—The licenses in the borough were renewed without any objection.—The license of the Sun and Moon Inn was transferred from John Bastable to John Charles Dean.—*Charles Woods*, a boy, was summoned for assaulting an elderly woman named Louisa Whitmarsh, at Shaston St. James, on the 11th August; *Sarah Gray*, mother of Woods, was summoned for a similar assault; *Marion Imber*, widow, was summoned on a similar charge; and *Mary Gray*, step-daughter of Sarah Gray, was charged with abusing Louisa Whitmarsh.—Mr. C. H. Kent defended in all these cases, and a mass of conflicting evidence was taken. It appears that Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Whitmarsh are next door neighbours, and have a common right to the use of a water tap. Mrs. Gray gave Mrs. Imber leave to obtain water from this tap, and Mrs. Whitmarsh objected to her doing so. Being at the tap at the same time, a dispute arose between Mrs. Whitmarsh and Mrs. Imber, and the other parties were alleged to have joined in the altercation. Water was thrown on either side, but it was difficult to say who began the amusement.—The

Editor Replies Thanks for sharing your discoveries Kathryn. Online newspapers really are transforming family history research.

Banished In Shame

In response to Sheila Patchett's letter in your August issue about 'remittance men' being sent to New Zealand, I wanted to share my story of a 'banished' ancestor.

My great great grandfather Rev Frederick Cassidy (1812–1890) was a Church of Ireland minister, but married the family maid Martha Brown (1812–1899). So he was exiled to County Donegal where Martha came from, and then migrated to New Zealand with their children. He had graduated from Trinity College Dublin and was chaplain to Lady Londonderry (probably a sinecure). In New Zealand he did not practise as a minister, and in one electoral roll says he was "of no occupation". However, he had a library of books and ended up in a 'grace and favour' house of the Bishop of Nelson.

The website Hunting Kiwis lists details of many remittance men in New Zealand: **genealogyjourno.wordpress.com/remittance-men-in-new-zealand/**.

There's also a mention of a remittance man in Arthur Ransome's children's novel *Swallows and Amazons* (1930), when Peggy says of her Uncle Jim: "Mother says he was the black sheep of the family when he was young, so he was sent to South America."

Remittance men were clearly sent to many distant countries.

John Wilson, Wellington, New Zealand

Editor Replies Have any other readers found a 'remittance man' in their family tree?

Tin-Bath Tactics

As I read Alan Crosby's 'Off the Record' column in the December issue about the joys of bath night, I was taken back to when I was about seven years old, in 1952. We also lived in a house without a bathroom or running hot water, and had a tin bath that was hung on an outside wall.

A female neighbour had the

habit of coming round most evenings and chatting to my mother and father. Since my father started work at 5am, he used to go to bed fairly early, and despite gentle hints, this neighbour would not go home.

One night while said neighbour was sat chatting, my father walked in with the tin bath and put it down in front of the fire.

The visitor asked "Are you going to have a bath?", to which my father replied, "Yes, you don't mind do you?" At that she fled from the house!

From that day onwards if the same neighbour was in our house, my father only had to go outside and bang the tin bath, and she would get up and leave. So our bath had two uses.

Before they died, my parents never spoke about their past lives. However, the articles in your magazine have helped me learn many things about my family.
Pete Foxton, by email

EDITOR REPLIES **What a great story Pete – thank you sending it in.**

Hastings Howler

I have bought *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* for some time now, and have found it very useful in my family tree research as well as interesting to read.

In the 'Around Britain' article on East Sussex in your November issue, I noticed that there was a photograph bearing the caption, "A fishing boat on the shore at Hastings in 1864." This is not so, and I wish to put the record straight because I was born and brought up in Hastings. I know the history of it very well, and still have relatives there.

The photograph is of the new part of Hastings called Denmark Place/Harold Place, and the large building is the old Queen's Hotel which is now a block of flats. The boats were pleasure boats that launched off the beach; there was a large-sailed pleasure boat called *The New Albertine* built in 1891, and they continued pleasure trips until 1924. My father remembered having a trip on *The New Albertine*.

I'm attaching two photographs I've taken of pictures reproduced in *Hastings: A Pictorial History* by D Robert Elleray (Phillimore & Co, 1979). The first is a late Victorian seafront scene with sailing boats at Denmark Place, and the second is a late Victorian beach scene with pleasure boats.

An interesting fact from another title, *The Archive Photographs Series: Hastings* complied by Tony Wales (Chalford, 1998): "c1910 – Boats and boat building had been part of the Hastings scene for many years by this time. In 1833 it was said that all the pleasure boats in Sussex were either built in Hastings or by boat builders from the town."
Robert Crouch, by email

EDITOR REPLIES **Thank you for correcting us and sharing some of the history of Hastings. The photo was wrongly captioned by the picture library, but at least we know for future reference.**

Robert kindly emailed us these evocative photographs that were published in a book about his beloved Hastings

Frances Cade responded to an article on our website about workhouse records: tinyurl.com/wdytya-work
My great grandmother died in Islington Workhouse. Why she was in there I have no idea.

Helpful Heroes

Having hit several brick walls over many months while trying to find information about my maternal grandmother Gertrude, and repeatedly encountering the same errors on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**), I was inspired by *WDYTYA? Magazine* to try other websites. I just want to give sincere thanks to the wonderful people of the free family history forum RootsChat (**rootschat.com/forum**), which is based in Bury, Lancashire.

The members were incredibly helpful and assisted me in overcoming my brick walls – all due to my grandmother's birth being registered with a totally different name, which sounds simpler to solve than it was.

I was given hints and sent images/suggestions from obviously very experienced people, all of which I pursued.

Once on the right track, I was able to find out much more about my grandmother, her life and ▶

HASTINGS: A PICTORIAL HISTORY BY D ROBERT ELLERAY (PHILLIMORE & CO, 1979)

her wider family. I'm so glad that I looked outside the usual genealogy sites so I could correct the information in my tree.
Dawn Robinson-Walsh, by email

Editor Replies There are some great genealogy 'genies' out there. You can also join our Facebook Group if you want to get advice and help others: facebook.com/groups/wdytyareadergroup/.

County Scholarships

As someone involved in education for over 80 years, but mainly secondary schooling, I was looking forward to Ruth A Symes' article in the September issue on 19th-century elementary schools, and was not disappointed. There's always something new to learn. It was a neat idea to frame the article with the idea of our time at school being "the best days of your life", and to contrast the plight of ordinary pupils with those "taken off by carriage" to grammar and public schools in the early 19th century.

It was a pity, though, that Ms Symes did not finish by recounting how by the end of the century it became possible – at least for bright working-class boys, and increasingly girls as well – to access secondary education and beyond, thanks to county scholarships. They may have been bright, but they must also have been well taught at their elementary schools; it was not all, in Ms Symes' phrase, "detention, lines and the dunce's cap".

My grandmother Annie Gulvin, who was featured in a 'Family Hero' article several years ago, was one such, and others like her were lucky to be born at the right time to be fully educated and have successful professional careers. It may not have been the best time of their lives, but it was certainly the luckiest.
Derek Turner, by email

Editor Replies Thank you Derek. My maternal grandfather was one of those working-class boys who benefited from a county scholarship, and went on to become a geologist. As you say, in a previous generation he would have left school at 12.

Shields Man Home For Golden Wedding

An Ambulance Brings Happiness To No. 8

EIGHT months ago Mr R. J. Ewen, of 8 Lilburn Street, North Shields, was in an accident at Algernon Pit, Backworth. It was found that both his legs were fractured and he was sent to hospital, where surgeons told him recovery would take a long time.

Yesterday, Mr Ewen was still a patient in hospital, able to walk a little with sticks, but still in the hands of the doctors.

HE MUST GO BACK

But today he is home. An ambulance pulled up in Lilburn Street this morning bringing him from Hexham Emergency Hospital where special permission was granted to allow him a trip home.

In a few days he must go back, but he is home today for a special reason — his golden wedding.

Mr Ewen, a native of Birtley, married Louisa Foster of South Shields, 50 years ago at St. Stephen's Church, South Shields, and they have four sons, four daughters, and nine grandchildren.

They are to hold a family gathering this week-end, and shortly after that Mr Ewen will have to go back to hospital.

Welsh Comedy A Shields Success

Wishing Well, a comedy by E. Eynon Evans, was presented by Holy Trinity Players at the Church Hall, Coach Lane, North Shields, last night. Repeat performances are being given each evening this week.

Kathy shared this newspaper story about her grandfather Robert John Ewen

@JDFamilyHistory was one of the volunteers who helped with Transcription Tuesday – see page 11
Taking part in @wdytyamagazine #TranscriptionTuesday by transcribing Irish baptism records. Trickier this year – some very dodgy handwriting, but haven't come across Latin ones yet!

Golden Celebration

Laura Berry's 'Focus On' article in the June issue about researching coal miners brought back memories. My family has a very long connection with coal mining in both north-east England and New Zealand, starting with my maternal great great grandfather Robert Seery and my paternal great grandfather George Ewen in County Durham. Some of their sons, grandsons and great grandsons were miners too.

I am not aware of any relatives being killed in mining accidents, but there have definitely been injuries. One was my grandfather Robert John (Bob) Ewen, who was still working on maintenance at Backworth Mine at the age of 70 when he was hit by coal wagons that broke both his legs. No one else knew there had been an accident, and he was only found because another miner noticed that his lamp had not been returned at the end of his shift, and insisted on a search.

Eight months later he was still in hospital, and could only walk a little with sticks. On 18 September 1947 an ambulance took him home to North Shields for a few days to celebrate his golden-wedding anniversary with his family. The attached newspaper clipping tells the story.
Kathy McNeill, by email

Editor Replies It sounds as if your grandfather was made of tough stuff. I'm sure that was an anniversary to remember.

YOUR LETTER IN PRINT We reserve the right to edit any letters sent to the magazine. Messages posted to our Facebook wall and tweets sent to us may also appear in print. The choice of Star Letter is the editor's and the prize is subject to change.

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What's On

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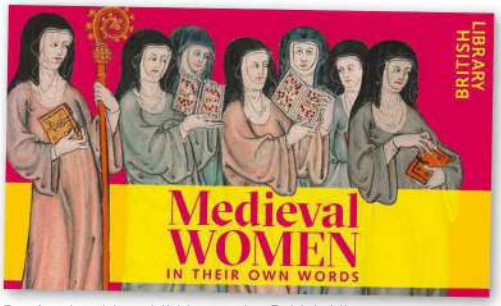
PICK OF THE MONTH

Discover more about the lives of your female forebears during the Middle Ages

Medieval Women: In Their Own Words

Until 2 March 2025

a **British Library, London**
t 0330 333 1144
w **medievalwomen.seetickets.com/timeslots/filter/medieval-women-in-their-own-words**



Don't miss this exhibition at the British Library

Find out what life was really like for women in the Middle Ages with this exhibition. More than 140 items from individuals both famous and forgotten shed new light on the experiences of our female ancestors and concerns that remain all too familiar today, from the gender pay gap and harmful stereotypes, to access to healthcare and education, as well as challenges faced by female leaders. Highlights include Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*, the first book in English definitely authored by a woman; a 12th-century ivory cross owned by Sibylle, countess of Flanders, who went on a crusade to the Holy Land; and the Battel Hall retable, a rare painting from a medieval nunnery. £17, or free for members.

IN PERSON

Tales From The Caves

Until 9 March 2025

a **Weston Gallery, Nottingham**
t 0115 846 7777
w **lakesidearts.org.uk/exhibition/tales-from-the-caves/**

This exhibition tells the story of the people who have carved out a life in Nottingham's caves, from medieval tanneries and breweries to the overcrowded slums and makeshift air-raid shelters of the 19th and 20th centuries. Free.

Show And Tell – The Women Of Westgate Alms Houses, 1890–1939

4 December

a **Warwickshire County Record Office, Warwick**
t 01926 738959
w **heritage.warwickshire.gov.uk/events/event/174/show-and-tell-the-women-of-westgate-alms-houses-1890-1939**

In this talk a Warwickshire County Record Office volunteer will reveal how she went down a rabbit hole to research the women living in the Westgate Alms Houses. Free.

Accommodating Poverty: The Homes Of The Poor In Suffolk And Beyond, c1670–1870

5 December

a **The Hold, Ipswich**
t 01473 296666
w **tinyurl.com/ticket-source-harley**

Dr Joseph Harley draws on records in local archives to reveal what the homes of Suffolk's poor were like, including the remarkable work of Rev Richard Cobbold, who painted and described properties in his village of Wortham, Suffolk. There will be the chance to see the original Cobbold volumes too. £8.

Ulster Home Guard – Duty Without Glory

5 December

a **Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast**
t 028 9053 4800
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-ulster**

In this talk author David R Orr will explore the role of the Home Guard in Northern Ireland during the Second World War. Free.

Oh No It Isn't – A History Of Pantomime

7 December

a **Dartford Science and Technology College**
t 01322 527604
w **tinyurl.com/nwkfhs-panto**

This festive talk sees Pete Allen share the history of this traditional Christmas entertainment. Free to members of North West Kent Family History Society (annual membership costs £10), non-members are asked to make a small donation towards costs.

Battle Of Britain Spitfire Ace

12 December

a **International Bomber Command Centre, Lincoln**
t 01522 514755
w **tinyurl.com/ibcc-ace**

Discover the life and legacy of Flight Lieutenant William Nelson, a first-generation Canadian Jew, in the latest event in the centre's Lecture & Supper Series. £16.

Archives On Show: Ephemera

13 December

a **The London Archives**
t 020 7332 3820
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-ephemera**

Browse a selection of ephemera from The London Archives' collections at this event. Free.

ONLINE

Society Of Genealogists

Various dates

w **members.sog.org.uk/events**

Upcoming society talks include 'Illegitimacy in England & Wales, 1837–1960: Birth Registers and Beyond' (7 December), 'Victorian & Early 20th Century Baby Farmers' (11 December) and 'Beyond the Birth Certificate' (12 December). £10 each.

The British High Street At Christmas

4 December

w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-high**

Discover how Christmas was celebrated on the traditional British high street in this talk by historian Annie Gray arranged by The National Archives. Pay what you can, £5 suggested.

Humour In Genealogy

11 December

w **tinyurl.com/ihgs-broom**

This Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies event sees Chris Broom offer "a light-hearted walk through a variety of genealogical records, reinforcing the value of scrutinising original documents". £10.

Did Cromwell Ban Christmas?

12 December

w **chfhs.org.uk/did-cromwell-ban-christmas-with-stuart-orme-447**

Did Oliver Cromwell really ban Christmas, or is it a myth? Find out in this Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire Family History Society talk by Stuart Orme. Free.

BOOK AHEAD

Get expert advice about Scottish family history

Scottish Research Online

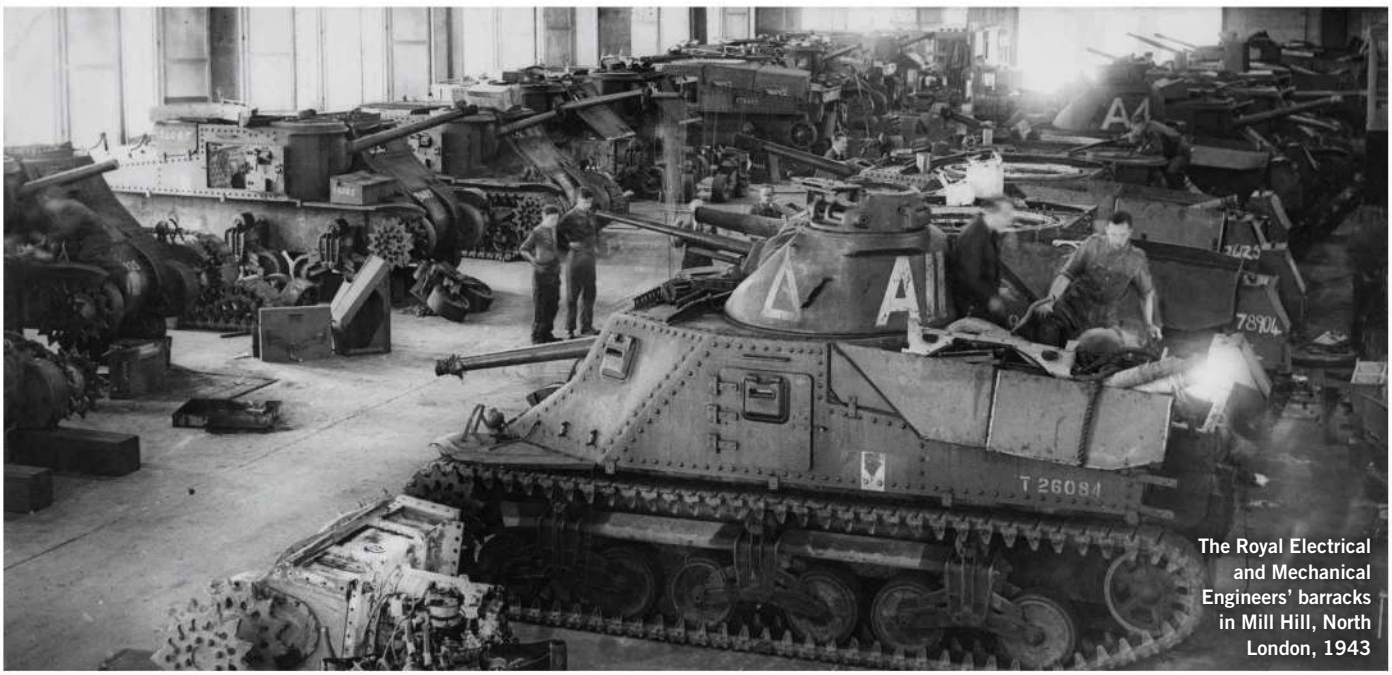
Starts 6 January 2025

w **pharostutors.com/scottish-research-online**

If you have roots in Scotland, start the New Year with this five-week online course from Pharos Tutors. Regular *WDYTYA? Magazine* contributor Chris Paton will cover all of the major websites and record sets you need in your research. £70.

News

Rosemary Collins and **Sarah Williams** report on data releases and genealogy news



The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers' barracks in Mill Hill, North London, 1943

Ancestry releases first batch of WW2 army service records

Family historians whose ancestors served in the British Army during the Second World War will welcome the publication of the first tranche of service records from the conflict on family history site Ancestry (ancestry.co.uk).

The collection will be the largest release so far of army service records from the war, and marks a major step in the digitisation of the collection that is being transferred from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to The National Archives at Kew (TNA). Ancestry was awarded the contract to digitise the records in 2023.

The new records consist of 1,711,537 Medal Index Cards (MICs), 133,366 service records from the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and 228,736 service records from selected smaller units, covering areas including the Pioneer Corps, the Military Police, the Royal Corps of Music, the Royal Army Veterinary Corps and the Royal Army Dental Corps. The service records have previously been indexed on TNA's online catalogue Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**).

The MICs were created when servicemen or their next of kin applied for their campaign medals after the war – they were not automatically sent to those who served – and provide details such as service number, address and the theatres that they served in. The cards are written in the hand of the applicant.

The service records are available on Ancestry. Indexes of the MICs are available on Ancestry but the original records are only available on Fold3 (**fold3.com**) and Forces War Records (**uk.forceswarrecords.com**), Ancestry's sites dedicated to military records.

The service records that have gone online comprise attestation records, statements of service, B103 service and casualty forms, and tracer cards which documented promotions and transfers. Medical records and conduct reports, along with other miscellaneous records included in a person's file, will not be included as part of the digitised record.

Because of the medical information contained within the files, the MOD and TNA have agreed that the rest of the record will remain closed until 115 years after the individual's birth.

This arrangement is likely to disappoint some family historians and researchers. Previously it was possible to apply for a service record via a Subject Access Request (SAR) form, when copies of all of the records held in the person's file were supplied including medical and conduct reports. Now researchers will only be able to have records opened before the 115-year cut-off date if they make a successful freedom of information (FOI) request.

Similarly, there will be restrictions relating to the MICs where medals were applied for by next of kin. In these cases, the name and address of the applicant will be withheld until 82 years after the medals were applied for. Because it was up to those who served, or their family, to apply for medals, some applications were made decades later.

GETTY IMAGES

NEWS IN BRIEF

A page from the photograph album

Scotland's People adds Barlinnie Prison records

A major set of registers from Scotland's largest prison has gone online. Approximately 180,000 records from Barlinnie Prison in Glasgow have been published on the Scottish government's family history website Scotland's People (**scotlandspeople.gov.uk**). The records date from the prison's opening in 1882 until 1899. The collection can be searched by name, and features images of the original registers. An album with more than 2,000 photographs of prisoners has also been digitised.

The Who When Where Genealogy Forum

Online Who When Where Genealogy Forum closes

The Who When Where Genealogy Forum has shut down after running for over four years. The forum was founded by former members of the *WDYTYA? Magazine* forum when we made the difficult decision to close it down. The administrators explained, "Whilst the Forum was well received and used when it launched in June 2020 the numbers posting queries or comments has fallen substantially over the past year and we no longer feel this is sustainable." Forum discussions can be downloaded for free from a folder on Google Drive: **tinyurl.com/drive-google-wwwgf**.

Transcribers at the NLW on 5 November

28,511 records transcribed on Transcription Tuesday

***Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* readers transcribed 28,511 family history records during our annual Transcription Tuesday volunteer event on 5 November.**

Volunteers helped transcribe records for two projects online.

For the first project, in partnership with free family history website FamilySearch (**familysearch.org**), readers transcribed Irish Catholic parish records.

Kaylee Rae Shell, FamilySearch's indexing project coordinator, said, "On Tuesday, November 5, 2024, we had 404 batches indexed and 622 batches reviewed for Ireland projects leading to approximately 25,000 new searchable records! This is an amazing accomplishment for a single day, and we hope that people who participated enjoyed the experience and will continue to help us transcribe these records."

We also partnered with the National Library of Wales (NLW; **library.wales**), which hosted an in-person 'Transcribathon', to transcribe a 1923 peace petition, signed by more than 390,000 women in Wales. In total, 3,511 entries were transcribed.

Nia Dafydd, promotion and marketing manager at the NLW, commented, "Having digitised the petition, transcribing allows us to make it much more accessible, and we are extremely grateful to all of our volunteer transcribers who have contributed their time, effort and enthusiasm towards this goal."

CAN YOU HELP?

A woman at Eastleigh Railway Works

The Watercress Line Heritage Railway (**watercressline.co.uk**) is searching for women who worked at Eastleigh Railway Works in Hampshire in the Second World War, or their relations. Female workers at Eastleigh played a crucial role in the war effort by building Merchant Navy steam locomotives. They were the only major engine class to be designed and built during the war, due to the shortage of labour and materials, and were used for transportation on the Southern Railway routes to the channel ports. One of those trains, Locomotive 35005 Canadian Pacific, is now being restored, with a launch event planned in spring 2025. The Watercress Line is appealing for any of the surviving female workers or their families to attend the launch. If you can help, please email *museum@watercressline.co.uk*.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES / DENNIS HOLDAWAY/THE WATERCRESS LINE

Wreckage from the 1981 Penlee Lifeboat Disaster

Ancestry adds RNLI records

The records of thousands of volunteers who served with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (rnli.org) and risked their lives to save those in peril at sea are now available on family history site Ancestry (ancestry.co.uk), as the RNLI celebrates its 200th anniversary.

The collection consists of 58,227 records dating from 1824–1989, and includes digitised images of the original documents. In addition, it is free to search for those who aren't members of Ancestry.

The records include crew cards, presentation books, service books and pension ledgers.

They are a good way of finding records of ancestors who served in the RNLI and were awarded medals, and include famous figures.

For example, they show that on 24 October 1838, the RNLI awarded Silver Medals to William Darling and his daughter Grace.

William was the keeper of Longstone Lighthouse in the Farne Islands. On 7 September 1838, the paddle steamer *Forfarshire* was wrecked nearby. William and Grace set out to sea in a rowing boat and rescued the survivors, leading to Grace becoming a national hero.

The records also relate to more recent maritime disasters, including the Penlee Lifeboat Disaster of 19 December 1981.

The cargo vessel *Union Star* was off the coast of Cornwall when its engines failed in a storm. The lifeboat *Solomon Browne* with eight crew set off from Penlee Lifeboat Station at Mousehole to rescue the ship's crew of five, as well as its three passengers.

Tragically, the rescue attempt failed and the crew of the lifeboat died, together with all those on the *Union Star*.

The Ancestry collection includes records of the posthumous medals that were awarded to the members of the crew.

356

The number of aerial photos of Britain in the 1930s that are now available on Historic England's site (**tinyurl.com/wdytya-he-pho**)

Alice Molland

The last woman believed to have been executed for witchcraft in England may actually have been named Avis – and survived (**tinyurl.com/wdytya-avis**)

Over 15,000

The number of 18th- and 19th-century mills on a map added to the National Library of Scotland's maps website (**tinyurl.com/nls-mills**)

Liverpool

Collections from the city's museums and archives are available through a new online hub (**digitalheritagelab.liverpool.ac.uk/**)

1,300

The number of records of WW2 Polish refugees in Britain that have been added to The National Archives' catalogue (**tinyurl.com/tna-pol**)

Findmypast subscribers have new options

Findmypast overhauls its subscription packages

Genealogical records website Findmypast (findmypast.co.uk) has made major changes to how its subscriptions work.

Previously, the site offered four subscription levels – 'Starter', 'Plus', 'Pro' and 'Premium', which was the only package that also included access to the 1921 census for England and Wales.

The new system offers only two levels of subscription – the 'Family Tree' tier, costing £9.99 per month on a rolling contract, and the 'Everything' subscription, with three payment options: £24.95 monthly, £59.99 quarterly or £199.99 annually, again on a rolling contract (although if you wish to avoid automatic renewals, or you wish to gift a subscription, you can order a three-month or year's subscription via **findmypast.co.uk/gift-subscriptions**).

The 'Family Tree' subscription uses the website's algorithm to suggest records, which you can then view and attach to your Findmypast tree. You can search for records independently but can only view them if they have been flagged up by the website based on your family tree entries. In contrast, the 'Everything' level provides access to all of the site's records, including the 1921 census.

Current subscribers to Findmypast will stay on their existing package for now, but if they let their subscription lapse then renew, they will be offered one of the new packages.

GETTY IMAGES

A Georgian Christmas

Alan Crosby celebrates John Clare's verse about Christmas in the Georgian period

The poet John Clare had a tragic life. Born in 1793 at Helpston, near Peterborough, he worked as an agricultural labourer as a child, but also attended the village school at nearby Glinton until he was 12. In 1820 he married a milkmaid named Martha Turner, and the couple eventually had seven children. Meanwhile, he had become captivated by words, reading poetry and starting to write poems of his own. Money was always desperately short, and he determined to publish his verse in the hope of earning some financial reward.

Clare's first two volumes appeared in 1820 and 1821. They met with critical acclaim, but did not make him rich. The pressures grew and, although he continued to write and publish, Clare began to experience depression and melancholy. By the mid-1830s his mental health was deteriorating, and between 1837 and July 1841 he was a voluntary patient at a private asylum in Epping Forest. Just after Christmas 1841 Clare was admitted to the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, and remained there for the rest of his life. Northampton had a notably humane regime, so he was able to continue writing his poetry. He died there in May 1864 aged 70, and was buried at Helpston.

Clare several times emphasises the importance of tradition

Clare was an extraordinarily acute and sensitive observer of the world around him: the countryside; the natural history of birds and other animals, and trees and other plants; the changing seasons; the weather. He is perhaps our finest nature poet: a rural childhood and work as an impoverished ag lab gave him a unique understanding of the natural world. He particularly loved wintertime: the poems that he wrote about the cold, frosty, snowy season transport us back to the English countryside two centuries ago.

One of the longest of the winter poems is *December – Christmas*. Like some of his other verse, it is written in dialect, which is not hard to follow and adds a powerful sense of authenticity. Clare begins by proclaiming that special time of year: "Christmass is come and every hearth / Makes room to give him welcome now." Then, in recognition of the way that this was one of the few days off which our forebears could enjoy, he observes that "The huswife sets her spining bye / And bids him welcome wi' her smiles / Each house is swept the day before / And windows stuck wi' evergreens."

They decorated the house with greenery (this was half a century before Christmas trees began to be popular). Putting sprigs of holly around the house was part of the festive ritual: "Gilt holly wi' its thorny pricks / And yew and box wi' berrys small / These deck the unus'd candlesticks / And pictures hanging by the wall."

The next verse vividly conjures up the spirit of Christmas, in a rural setting at the end of the Georgian period, when the commercialisation of the festival was not yet under way. Friendly greetings, a holiday to go visiting, and a cake! "Neighbours resume their annual cheer / Wishing wi' smiles and spirits high / Glad christmass and a happy year / To every morning passer bye / Milk maids their christmass journeys go / Accompanyd wi' favour'd swain / And childern pace the crumping snow / To taste their grannys cake again."

Clare several times emphasises the importance of tradition, of the time-honoured ways in which the occasion was celebrated. He was deeply attached to this aspect of Christmas, just as he relished the good humour and friendship of it all: "Where cottage hearths are blazing high / And labour resteth from his toils / Wi' merry mirth beguiling care / Old customs keeping wi' the day / Friends meet their christmass cheer to share / And pass it in a harmless way… The shepherd now no more afraid / Since custom doth the chance bestow / Starts up to kiss the giggling maid / Beneath the branch of mizzletoe."

There are several more verses. If you want to find out what Christmas meant to your ancestors, don't read a history book – turn to this lovely poem.

ALAN CROSBY lives in Lancashire and is the editor of *The Local Historian*

ILLUSTRATION WWW.SUEGENT.COM

NO LAUGHING MATTER

Have you heard the one about the comedy legend who's deadly serious about the Second World War? Here Al Murray discusses his new book on Arnhem with **Jonathan Wright**

A "British Alamo" replete with "bumbling generals, hubris, over-reach [and] staggering bravery". That's the verdict of comedian, Oxford University-educated historian and Second World War obsessive Al Murray on the unsuccessful fight to secure a bridgehead across the Rhine at Arnhem, in the German-occupied Netherlands, in September 1944. Murray also describes it as a "showbiz battle". And you know exactly what he means because, as narrative military history, the mission – in which thousands of soldiers were dropped up to 60 miles behind enemy lines as part of Operation Market Garden – has all of the drama and twists a screenwriter could wish for, while such was the courage on display that four soldiers and an RAF pilot were awarded the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest military honour.

The Allied commanders embarked on the operation in good faith

No wonder the battle has twice been the subject of movies, in Brian Desmond Hurst's *Theirs Is the Glory* (1946), filmed on location and featuring 200 veterans in its cast, and Richard Attenborough's epic *A Bridge Too Far* (1977), based on war correspondent Cornelius Ryan's book of that name published three years before.

So was Arnhem, as it has latterly been portrayed, simply a disaster waiting to happen, the worst element in a bad plan? Murray's latest book *Arnhem: Black Tuesday: The Classic Battle Told As Never Before* was published in September, and focuses on events during 24 crucial hours when Allied forces lost the initiative. He suggests that to answer such a question, it helps to forget what we know about the outcome with the benefit of eight decades of hindsight.

The Allied commanders "didn't think it was going to be a disaster," Murray reminds us. "They embarked on the operation, for want of a better expression, in good faith. They thought, 'This will work. We've got the means, we've got the hardware, and we've got the people.' "

Seen from the perspective of 1944, there were strong reasons to argue that Market Garden – the 'Market' stage of the operation involved airborne forces landing by parachute and glider to seize nine bridges, which in the 'Garden' stage land forces would then advance across – was well worth the risk.

Arguments For Action

First and foremost, if the Allies had managed to secure a Rhine crossing they could have bypassed Germany's heavily fortified defensive Siegfried Line and attacked through the Ruhr, potentially ending the war by Christmas. Then there was the fact that German forces in Normandy had been virtually destroyed during the summer of 1944. The Allies were in the ascendancy, sometimes advancing tens of

Who Was Zeno?

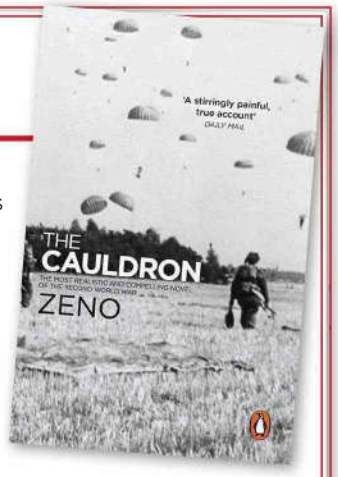
Meet a man who had many identities during his dramatic life

Gerald Theodore Lamarque was born on 2 June 1920, at least according to a 1998 article in *Punch*. He served as a soldier but often ran afoul of the law, culminating in him being sentenced to 18 months of hard labour. Whereupon he broke out of a military prison in Carrickfergus, County Antrim, and re-enlisted in the Army using the name of a schoolfriend, Kenneth Sidney Allerton.

For his actions at Arnhem, where he eventually escaped in a last-ditch evacuation across the Rhine, he was regarded as a hero by his peers and was granted a battlefield commission.

In 1958, Lamarque was convicted of murder after killing his ex-girlfriend's new partner, Eric Batty, and only escaped the noose because it was judged a 'crime of passion'. In prison, where he was a friend of Soviet double agent George Blake, Lamarque began to write and won the Arthur Koestler Award, created by author and journalist Arthur Koestler, a former prisoner himself, to encourage prisoners' literary endeavours.

His 1968 novel *The Cauldron* was a huge success. Following his release from jail, Lamarque lived for a while in Malta. Publishing three more books, he passed away in London in 1978.



The reissue of *The Cauldron (pictured)* began with Al Murray reading chapters aloud on his podcast during the Covid-19 pandemic. When Antoinette, Zeno's daughter, thanked him via Twitter, he offered to help her get the book back into print. "He was a victim of the war in so many ways," says Murray. "He was brutalised by it, but then ended up writing proper literature, and that strikes me as a kind of happy ending."

miles a day and keen to keep up momentum. Finally the Nazis were firing V-2 ballistic missiles at London from sites located in the Netherlands, and these terror weapons needed to be neutralised.

So Market Garden was given the green light. However, if there were good arguments for driving a salient deep into enemy territory, there's also a huge amount of truth in the idea that its planning was flawed. "Part of the problem is that the people planning it were all coming to it expecting that everyone else knew what they were doing," he says. "The Air Force people assumed that the Army knew what they were doing, and the Army people assumed that the Air Force people knew what they were doing."

The confusion, he adds, even spread to different branches within the same service. The result was that Field Marshal Bernard 'Monty' Montgomery, Market Garden's most senior advocate, was arguing for a high-risk plan based on partial information.

"It's that thing where someone says to you, 'Yeah, I've got that under control' – and they haven't. But how are you to know?"

Reality Bites

Those fighting knew soon enough that things were going wrong, including the enigmatic Zeno. He had enlisted as Kenneth Sidney Allerton, although that name in itself was a fiction (see the box), and at Arnhem served with the 21st Independent Parachute Company: 'pathfinders' whose job was to land ahead of the main force and set up eureka beacons. These electronic devices would indicate the landing zone for the paratroopers of the British 1st Airborne Division.

In 1968 Zeno published an account of Arnhem in his

GETTY IMAGES

Al Murray examines the Battle of Arnhem in his latest book

Members of the 1st Airborne Division photographed during the Battle of Arnhem in September 1944

novel *The Cauldron*, which has been re-released with an introduction by Murray. It is here the comedian makes the comparison to the disastrous Battle of the Alamo (1836), in which Mexican forces wiped out Texan defenders at a fort in modern St Antonio.

Pathfinding was dangerous, technical work conducted by elite soldiers: in Murray's estimation, "adventurers and scrappers and people who liked to fight". Yet they would never have expected to be involved in sustained action. "They're really highly trained, and too precious to end up fighting house to house." Nevertheless, as *The Cauldron* makes clear, that's exactly what happened after three "routine" days were followed by a desperate battle for survival.

A Complex Catastrophe

How a promising situation at Arnhem deteriorated so catastrophically is a story that Murray and military historian James Holland related this year over eight episodes of their podcast *We Have Ways of Making You Talk*. It's a complicated tale, but a recurring theme is of flawed planning not surviving contact with reality. Troops landed far from their objectives. Communications were at best patchy. German resistance was unexpectedly fierce. Supplies were dropped into areas under enemy control. Fog held up airborne reinforcements. The XXX Corps, advancing overland as the Garden, got bogged down and made slow progress.

Local children adopt a grave for a year, and write about their soldier

Nevertheless, a small force of British troops were able, temporarily, to hold one end of the road bridge at Arnhem – the eponymous bridge too far. Individual stories of courage from these days abound. Major Robert Henry Cain of the South Staffordshire Regiment, for example, won his Victoria Cross in part for taking on a German Tiger tank alone at close range, armed with an anti-tank weapon similar to the US Army's bazooka.

Ultimately, however, no amount of individual heroism could save the situation. More than 1,100 men of the 9,000-strong 1st Airborne Division were killed in action or died of their wounds. And while Market Garden liberated vast swathes of the Netherlands, the Allies failed in their ultimate objective of securing a bridgehead over the Rhine.

In recent years, many historians have argued that the operation was an unmitigated disaster. But, Murray says, the operation used to be simply "regarded as this bad week for the British Army, where they tried something that's worth the punt". He argues that Ryan's book and the resulting film became entangled with a then-prevalent "declinist idea that Britain's fading fast, and run by incompetent toffs".

But whatever the rights and wrongs of different narratives, the people of Arnhem haven't forgotten what happened. Recently, Murray and Holland visited for the 80th anniversary commemorations, where a wreath was laid by 99-year-old Arnhem veteran Geoff Roberts. For years, says Murray, many survivors didn't attend because "they thought they'd failed, and were embarrassed".

They needn't have worried. Thousands still turn out annually to honour those who fought. "Local schoolchildren adopt a grave for a year, and write stories about their dead soldier. And on the anniversary, they all hold flowers aloft and everyone applauds, and each child whispers the name of their soldier and places their flowers on his grave. I've been around the block – I'm 56 – and I was absolutely wrung out by that."

Resources

Take your research further

BOOKS

Arnhem: Black Tuesday
Al Murray
Bantam, 2024
Subtitled *The Classic Battle Told As Never Before*, Murray's book focuses on 19 September 1944, as Allied plans began to unravel.

The Cauldron
Zeno
Penguin, 2024
Gerald Theodore Lamarque's fictionalised account of his experiences at Arnhem was first published in 1968.

PODCAST

WE HAVE WAYS OF MAKING YOU TALK
w **goalhangerpodcasts.com/we-have-ways-of-making-you-talk**
Murray's hit podcast with James Holland takes a deep dive into the Second World War, and is freely available.

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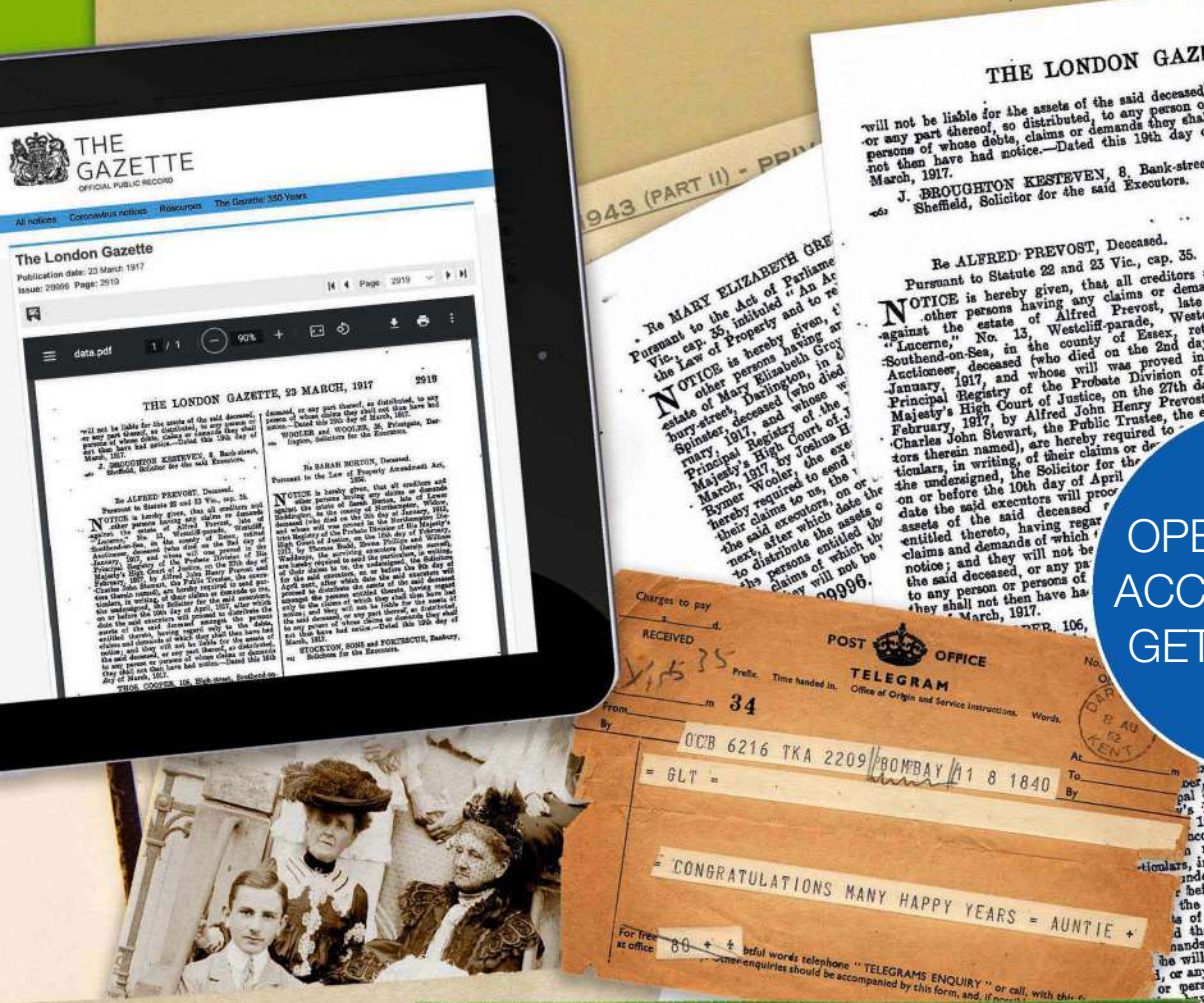

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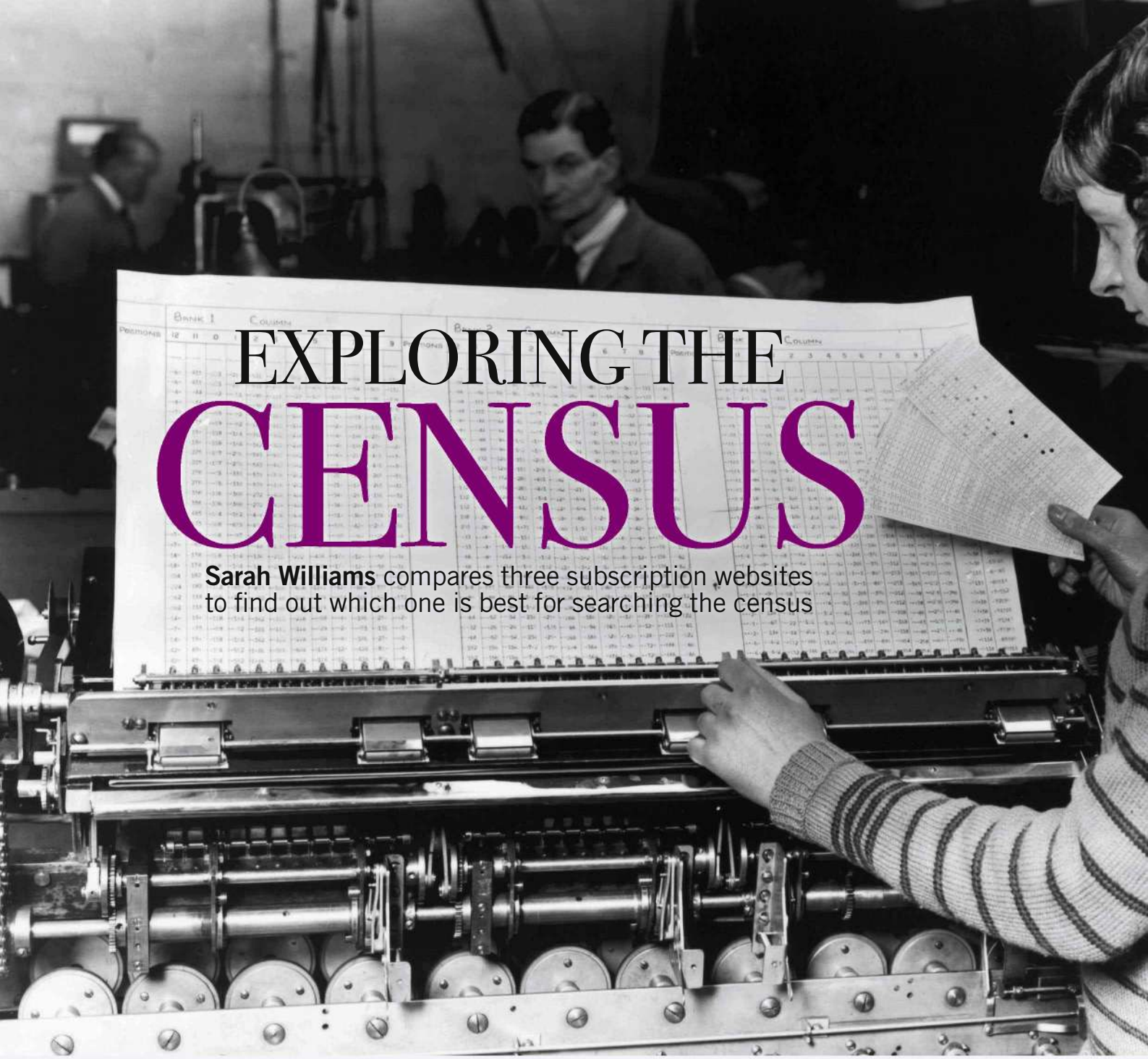


EXPLORING THE CENSUS

Sarah Williams compares three subscription websites to find out which one is best for searching the census

Although it's hard to imagine now, living in this age of information, over 200 years ago nobody knew the total population of the British Isles, and there were pressing reasons to find out.

Britain was at war with France, and wars need financing. A form of income tax had been introduced in 1798, but it was impossible to know how much money this would generate without an idea of how many people there were.

It was also important to know how many mouths the nation needed to feed, and how many men of fighting age were available.

The first census was taken on 10 March 1801. Very few examples have been preserved, because it was little more than a head count and enumerators were not tasked to record names (although some of them did).

Ever since then, Britain has completed a national census every 10 years (except for 1941), and from 1841 onwards these records have included names turning them into one of the cornerstones for researching your British roots.

It is important to remember, however, that a census only recorded who was in the house on a specific day. A household may have a visitor recorded and you would not know if they were there for a day or a year. If a wife was enumerated away from her husband, they may have separated; but equally, he may be working away from home, or she might be visiting an ailing parent.

All available British censuses taken in 1841–1921 have been digitised, and are available to search on commercial websites as well as free sites (although to a lesser degree). Currently the 1921 census for England and Wales can only be searched on Findmypast (although the site's exclusivity comes to an end in 2025) and, for Scotland, on the Scottish government's website Scotland's People. The earlier years, 1841–1911, can be accessed from a number of sites. For older Scottish census records, you can either search Scotland's People or access

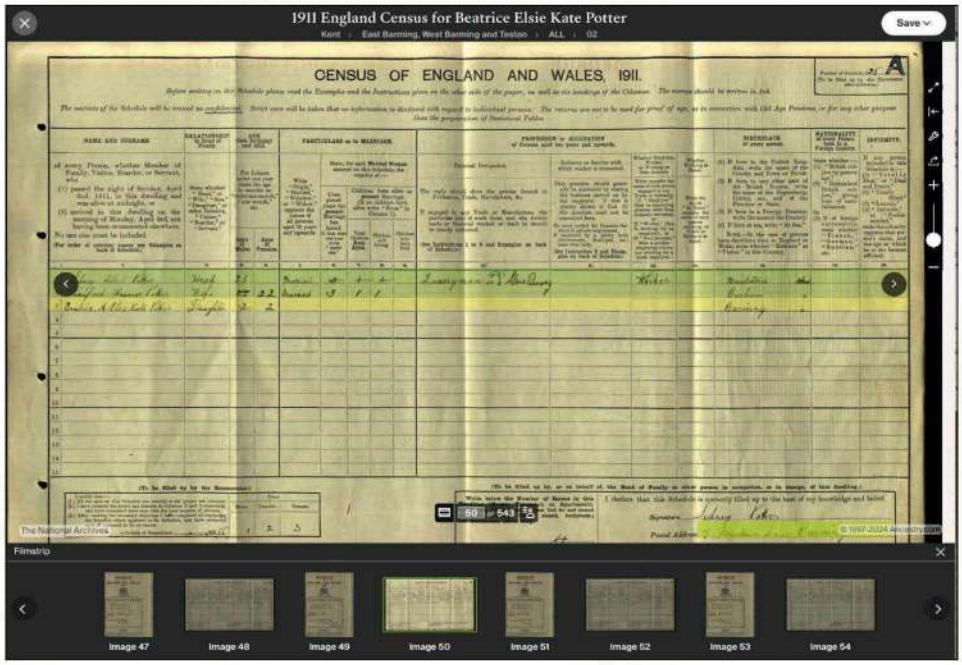
GETTY IMAGES

a transcription for 1841–1901, again available on the main subscription websites.

If you can't find your forebear on a census, there are a number of tricks you can use to uncover them. Sometimes playing around with the information you enter into a search engine can make a massive difference. For example, if a transcriber has misread 76 for 16 in the age column, entering a year of birth in your search is going to hinder the results.

Similarly, a transcriber might have struggled to read the name of your ancestor but coped better with one of their siblings, so it can help to search for other people you expect in a household.

Looking for addresses that ▶



Ancestry

ancestry.co.uk

This genealogy giant is resting on its laurels when it comes to its census collection, and has done little to improve functionality recently. We liked the mobile app and found the index generally good, but keyword and address searches are lacking.

CHEAPEST CENSUS PLAN Ancestry's 'UK Records Only' subscription currently costs £10.99 a month.

QUALITY OF INDEX Although there were some errors, the Ancestry index came top in our test. We particularly liked the way that the site incorporates corrections sent in by users. Because Ancestry has a large membership and has been accepting corrections for a long time, we came across many examples where the transcription was wrong but a user-submitted correction took us to the right record.

SEARCH EXPERIENCE You can search each census individually and add family members, which makes it possible to search for a family group without a surname. The keyword search can only search for words that have been indexed and for most of the censuses on Ancestry (excluding 1881, 1911 and the Scottish censuses) that does not include occupation or address.

RESULTS VIEW AND FILTERS The search results give you the name of the person you searched for, along with any spouse and one child plus a parent. You can also see the place and approximate year of birth. Usefully, you can hover your mouse over the result and view the whole transcript, making it quick and easy to check whether you have the right person without having to click through to each result. You can also adjust key search terms with a slider from broad to exact.

ADDRESS SEARCH Disappointingly, Ancestry offers no address search as an option before the 1911 census.

MOBILE The quick-search options on the Ancestry app prioritise census results, and the app is easy to use.

VERDICT

STRENGTHS Incorporates user corrections into the index; has a handy 'hover over' feature that enables you to check a record within search results; app enables easy mobile searches

WEAKNESSES No address search; some image quality is poor; can't search by occupation

3/5

FINDMYPAST

findmypast.co.uk

Findmypast is currently the only site to offer the 1921 census, although that exclusivity comes to an end in 2025. The website also has a useful address search and a much improved app. Most years now also include occupation as a keyword search.

CHEAPEST CENSUS PLAN

Findmypast has two very different subscription plans: 'Everything' gives access to all of its records for £24.99 a month (£199.99 a year), while 'Family Tree' costs just £9.99 a month but only lets you access records featured as hints via your online family tree on the website.

QUALITY OF INDEX On the whole the index performed well in our test. There were issues with the 1881 census, where the site uses an index created by volunteers from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints years ago that is also used by Ancestry. This index has many errors, and we found that some of them are still wrong on Findmypast.

SEARCH EXPERIENCE From the main census search page, you can search all census records, or you can type in the year you wish to search in the 'Record set' box to confine your search. Findmypast only lets you add one other household member making it harder to search for family groups, but it does better than Ancestry for including optional keywords such as occupation.

RESULTS VIEW AND FILTERS

Findmypast's search results only provide year of birth and general location, with no quick option to hover over a record to view more detail. This means that you can be forced to spend a lot of time going in and out of records to find your match. On the plus side, it is easy to adjust your filters, and the website says how many results it has found. You are also given a map of the area if you click through to the transcription page.

ADDRESS SEARCH This is easy to do. From the homepage, select 'Search Addresses' from the 'Search' dropdown, and search by street name and location.

MOBILE Recent improvements make it as easy to search census records as it is via a browser. From the initial search window, scroll down to 'Do a more specific search' and then 'All categories' to reach the census search page, or go straight to the 1911 or 1921 census.

VERDICT

STRENGTHS Easy address search; search on keywords including occupation; exlusive access to the 1921 census for England and Wales; map supplied

WEAKNESSES Search results can be time-consuming to navigate; quality of some of the images is poor

3/5

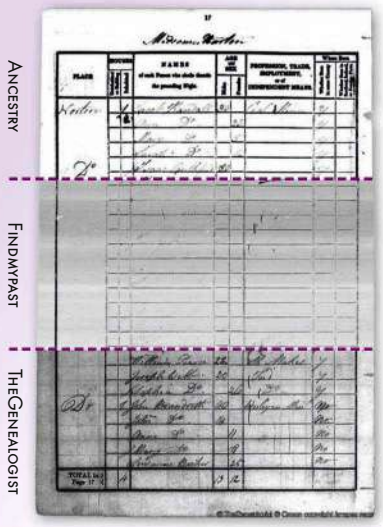
▶ are documented in other records can also help, and this is one of the reasons why some people prefer a website that facilitates address searches.

COMPARING ACROSS SITES

An underrated method of flushing out a relative who is missing from the census is to try a different website. We set about testing three subscription sites – Ancestry, Findmypast and TheGenealogist – to see what benefits they offer, and were amazed by how different the collections were in places. We didn't include the free websites FamilySearch (**familysearch.org**) and FreeCEN (**freecen.org.uk**)

IMAGE QUALITY **A number of pages were harder to read on some sites than others**

One of the main differences between the three sites was in the quality of images. Our example to the right shows a montage page from the 1841 census that was illegible on Findmypast, difficult to read on Ancestry and clear on TheGenealogist. Worryingly, in one of our tests, where we knew that the images were poor for the 1871 census in Southwark, we found that a number of pages, including the page we were looking for, were missing on Findmypast. Again, they were hard to read on Ancestry and really only legible on TheGenealogist. If you can't find someone in the census, the quality of the image might be a factor.



because there are no barriers to trying them to search the census. In fact, we recommend them when someone proves elusive.

We tested the websites using a number of households across each decade, including records we knew were tricky to find. We ranked them for the accuracy of the transcription, the quality of the image, the search options available and how results were presented.

Sometimes the results popped up instantly across all three websites, but at other times there were big differences. For example, one household in 1871 we could only find initially using TheGenealogist. We had to then scroll through the census on Ancestry to find the same page, which was so poorly scanned it was practically illegible. Trying to do the same on Findmypast we discovered that there were pages missing on the site, including the one with our household on it.

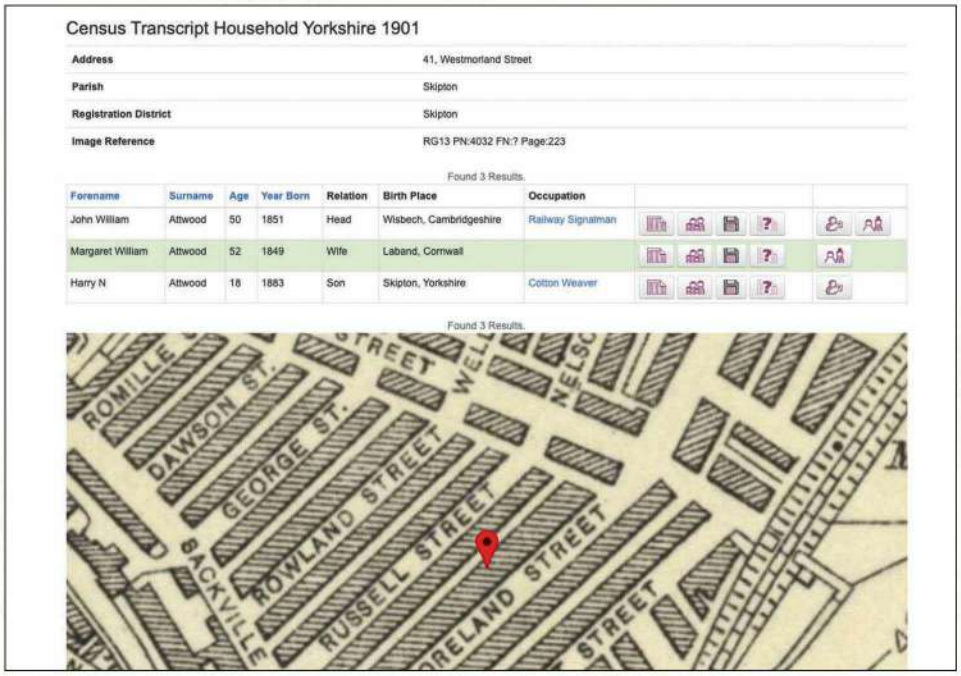
And it wasn't just this example where TheGenealogist came out top for the quality of its scans. For most decades before 1901, and for 1841 in particular, the website provided a far more legible image.

Of course every census comprises millions of records, making it difficult to measure transcription accuracy with absolute confidence, but our test has given us a chance to flag up some differences between the sites.

Crucial Differences

Although Ancestry's transcription performed best, helped by an excellent system for incorporating corrections from its users, and Findmypast is currently the only website to offer the 1921 census, the website that performed best overall was TheGenealogist. Not only does the site offer noticeably better images, but we liked the mapping capability, the search options (including address and family searches) and the way that the results are presented.

The census is only one record among many you will need to build up a picture of who your ancestors were and what they did, but it's an important one. If you can't find someone, it might be worth looking on a different site.



TheGenealogist

thegenealogist.co.uk

Our surprise winner, this site punches above its weight for the census. Searching is straightforward with plenty of flexibility and results that are easy to scroll through and filter. We especially loved the use of maps and the quality of the images.

CHEAPEST CENSUS PLAN The 'Starter' subscription costs just £14.95 for three months, making it the best-value option for someone who just wants to search the census, and an affordable add-on if you already subscribe to other sites.

QUALITY OF INDEX In our test, TheGenealogist didn't perform quite as well as its competitors. However, since it's the only site that doesn't rely on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' transcription for the 1881 census, it offers a really useful alternative.

SEARCH EXPERIENCE Users can search by person or family, making it easy to group people together by first name if you think that there may be problems with the surname. This is also the only site to let you search by occupation in the keyword box for all of the censuses.

RESULTS VIEW AND FILTERS Results are laid out very clearly at TheGenealogist, with the option to hover over a record to see other members of the household. You can also hop easily between decades and counties via the left-hand filter. If you click through to a transcription you get a useful map marking the approximate location, sometimes down to street level.

ADDRESS SEARCH The Master Search page allows you to select an address-search option, and we found that the results are easy to navigate.

MOBILE Although TheGenealogist has a dedicated tree-building app (TreeView), record searches have to be made via your web browser. Luckily the website is very mobile-friendly, and its Master Search page is as easy to use on a mobile device as it is on a desktop computer.

VERDICT

STRENGTHS Clear images; flexible search options; easy to use; excellent keyword search with occupation transcribed across all censuses; all results come with location marked on a historic map and an address-search option

WEAKNESSES The index had slightly more errors in our test

4/5

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WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

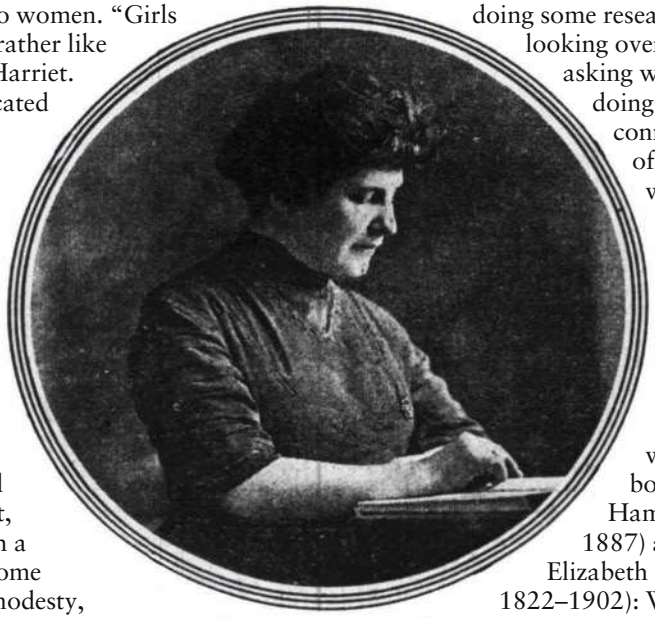
'My Canadian Relation Fought For Women's Rights'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

Inspired by a Christmas letter from 1888, Megan Harrison began to research her 3x great grand aunt Harriet. She uncovered an early campaigner for women's rights and plenty of other surprises, she tells **Claire Vaughan**

Typewritten in festive green-and-red ink with an age-worn ribbon in the top-left-hand corner, the letter is dated Christmas 1888. Sent by Harriet Bullock, 28 Mackay Street, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, to her 17-year-old niece Annie Elizabeth Hammond in England, it was treasured enough to have made it down the generations into the hands of Annie's great great granddaughter Megan Harrison. It's beautifully worded, with striking insights into attitudes to women. "Girls in Canada are rather like boys," writes Harriet. "They are educated the same, play the same, have gymnastics, and fence, and snow-shoe, and talk slang, and are altogether very different from their meek English sister. But I will tell you a secret, I like them with a little of both, some more English modesty, and a little of the Canadian independence." Also you can find this magazine on s a n e t . s t ". The letter is fascinating. You" really get a sense of Harriet's intelligence, creativity and spirit," says Megan. "It makes you want to know more about ".her

You really get a sense of Harriet's intelligence, creativity and spirit



This portrait of Harriet Bullock née Hammond was published in the *Toronto Star Weekly*

In fact, neither Harriet nor Annie were remotely meek – one ended up at the forefront of the fight for women's rights, and the other at the centre of a scandal.

Megan, a communications and marketing coordinator from Leicester, has been researching her tree for several years. "My mum has been interested in her family history for a long time. One day, she was at the computer doing some research. I started looking over her shoulder asking what she was doing, beginning to connect the dots of how it all worked. My curiosity grew from there."

Megan discovered that Harriet (1853–1939) was one of five children who were born to Thomas Hammond (1819–1887) and his wife Elizabeth (née Brierley, 1822–1902): William (1843–1878), Sarah Ann (1846–1911), James Thomas (1857–1902) and Louisa (1862–1946). Moving down from Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland, the family settled in Stockport, Cheshire.

"I'm a direct descendant of Harriet's brother William; he was my 3x great grandfather. In the 1861 census, he's with the family in Birkenhead at the Abbey Street County Gaol, where Thomas was superintendent of constabulary. After that I couldn't find him anywhere."

Will Revelation

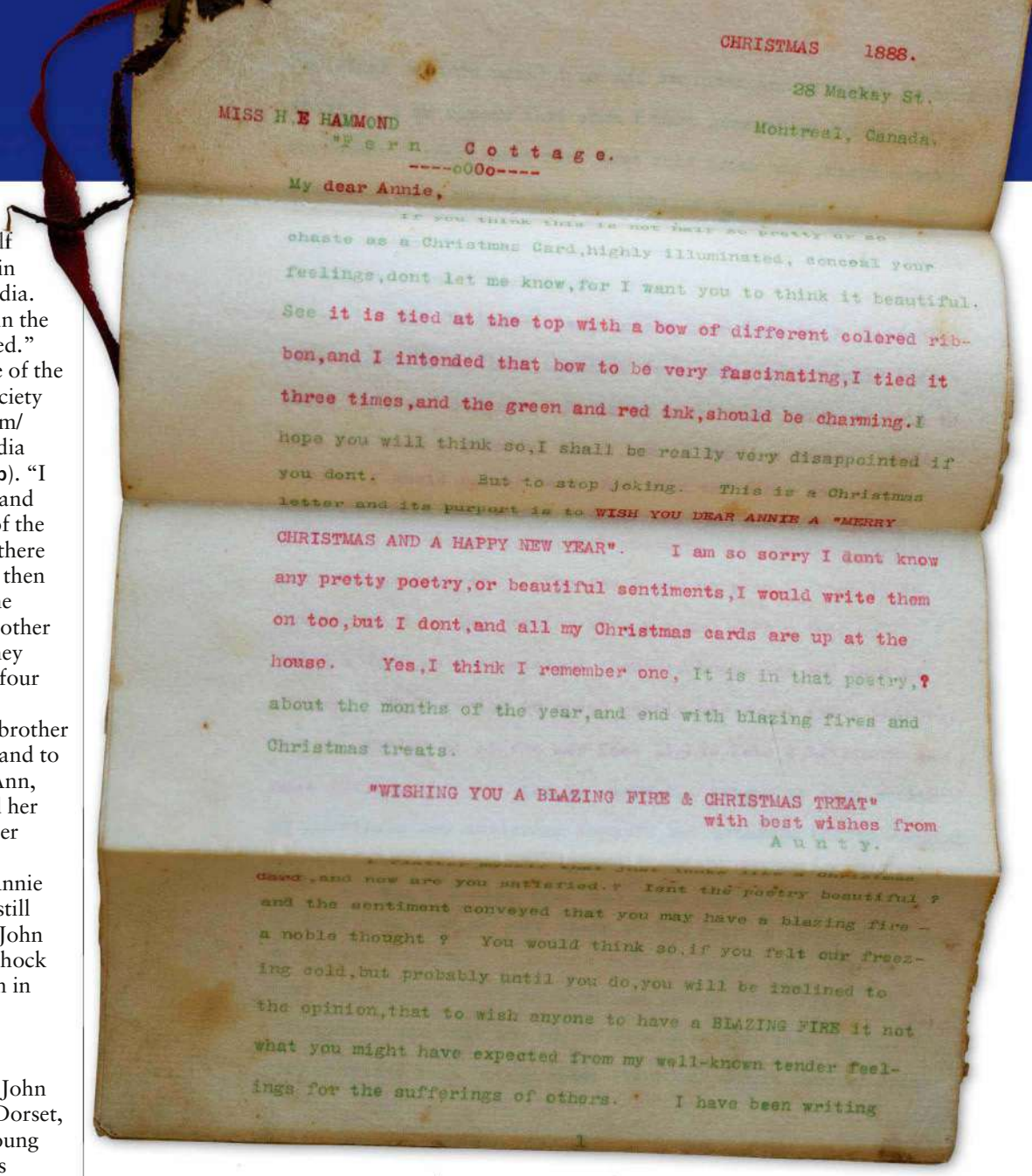
The mystery was solved by Thomas' 1874 will, in which he left money to all his children – including William, "now in the Royal Artillery, in which corps he enlisted under the name Walter Atkinson". With her 3x great grandfather now firmly in her sights, Megan dug deeper and worked out he had gone to fight in India at some point between 1861 and 1871.

"There had long been a family rumour of somebody running away with an Irish actress. I don't know if it was him, but he married Mary Anne Donaghue, who was of Irish descent." So did he elope? "Sadly, I don't think we'll ever know why he changed his name and I have no proof that Mary was an actress," says Megan. "He was included in his father's will, written after he went to India, so they were obviously on good terms and Thomas knew about the name change."

The couple married in 1871, in Secunderabad, India, and soon after had a daughter, Annie Elizabeth, who would later be the recipient of Harriet's letter. A son, Ernest, followed. "They did have three other children, Walter, Charles Harry and William, but they all died in infancy." ▶

UNP/RICHARD GRANGE

"It was incredibly special to discover Harriet on my tree," Megan reveals


CHRISTMAS 1888.

28 Mackay St.

Montreal, Canada.

MISS H E HAMMOND

"Fern Cottage.

----oOOo----

My dear Annie,

chaste as a Christmas Card,highly illuminated, conceal your feelings,dont let me know,for I want you to think it beautiful. See it is tied at the top with a bow of different colored ribbon,and I intended that bow to be very fascinating,I tied it three times,and the green and red ink,should be charming.I hope you will think so,I shall be really very disappointed if you dont. But to stop joking. This is a Christmas letter and its purport is to WISH YOU DEAR ANNIE A "MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR". I am so sorry I dont know any pretty poetry,or beautiful sentiments,I would write them on too,but I dont,and all my Christmas cards are up at the house. Yes,I think I remember one, It is in that poetry,? about the months of the year,and end with blazing fires and Christmas treats.

"WISHING YOU A BLAZING FIRE & CHRISTMAS TREAT"

with best wishes from

Aunty.

and the sentiment conveyed that you may have a blazing fire – a noble thought ? You would think so,if you felt our freezing cold,but probably until you do,you will be inclined to the opinion,that to wish anyone to have a BLAZING FIRE it not what you might have expected from my well-known tender feelings for the sufferings of others. I have been writing

Megan's family archive includes this wonderful Christmas letter that Harriet sent to her niece Annie Hammond, Megan's great great grandmother

UNP/RICHARD GRANGE

▶ William/Walter himself died young of encephalitis in 1878, and was buried in India. "He was a sergeant major in the Royal Artillery when he died."

Megan used the database of the Families in British India Society (FIBIS) to search for William/Walter and his family in India (**search.fibis.org/bin/index.php**). "I found the marriage record and baptism records for some of the children." After his death, there was nothing for a year, but then his widow reappeared in the records. "Mary married another soldier in England. Then they returned to India, and had four children together."

Annie Elizabeth and her brother Ernest moved back to England to live with their aunt Sarah Ann, William/Walter's sister, and her husband John George Parker in Liscard, Cheshire. In the 1881 and 1891 censuses, Annie Elizabeth and Ernest were still living with Sarah Ann and John George, but Megan had a shock when she searched for them in the next census.

A Shocking Liaison

Annie Elizabeth and Uncle John were living in Weymouth, Dorset, together with their three young children, including Megan's great grandmother Dorothy. "He was 25 years older than her!" exclaims Megan. John was still married to Sarah Ann, so he and Annie Elizabeth never married. Eventually they split up and by 1904, Annie had married someone else.

Meanwhile, Harriet was living a very different life in Montreal. But how did she end up there?

Using her letter to her niece as a starting point, Megan began looking at immigration lists and Canadian censuses for the answer. "We found her living in Montreal with her husband, John, and son, Harry, in the 1891 Canadian census, and her job was recorded as 'college business'. We also found passenger lists for her later years where she was described as a writer." One list recorded Harriet's destination as the address of a friend she was visiting – a Dr Marion Hansford, who turned out to be one of the early leading female doctors and school medical inspectors in Montreal. "Harriet clearly knew some interesting people. I searched online newspaper archives, and found several articles from Montreal. I discovered that Harriet had been the principal of the Montreal Shorthand Institute and Business College, as well as the president of the Montreal Women's Suffrage Society – the first suffrage group in Montreal, which she founded in January 1910."

Harriet was the president of the first suffrage group in Montreal

Megan contacted the Montreal History Group at the University of Quebec (**ghm.uqam.ca/en/**) and Camille Robert, a lecturer who had researched the city's suffrage movement, got in touch. She hadn't come across Harriet, but began hunting for information about her. She hit the jackpot with an article featuring Harriet in the 19 October 1912 edition of the *Toronto Star Weekly* newspaper.

"It described her as 'a very successful Canadian woman' and in addition to her running the business college and suffrage society, she was credited with bringing the Montessori education system over to Canada." It filled in all the gaps for Megan, and solved one puzzle that had perplexed her for some time – Harriet's whereabouts in the 1911 census.

Megan has had these evocative portraits of Annie and her brother Ernest framed

"I now know that she had been in Italy at that point, training under the system's creator Dr Maria Montessori." The educator prioritised hands-on learning more than formal teaching, a radical concept at the time.

Harriet's achievements were recorded in detail in the profile, enabling Megan to write an account of this remarkable woman's life. "Harriet lived with her family near Stockport in Cheshire before marrying John Bullock in 1875. Their only child, Harry Hammond Bullock, arrived the following year."

The family emigrated to Montreal in the 1880s, and Harriet found work as a shorthand typist and stenographer at the city's Phonographic Institute at the Temple Building. She applied to study law at the city's McGill University, but was turned down. This did not hold her back, however. In the early 1900s, she founded the successful Montreal Shorthand Institute and Business College.

Supporting The Strikers

"In February 1910, Harriet was heavily involved in the Cloak Workers' Union strike in Montreal. The suffrage society organised female workers not yet represented by the union, and helped them to claim their rights.

"Technical education was high on the agenda for Harriet, with a visit from the Royal Commission on Technical Education to the society arranged for January 1911 and Harriet travelling to Toronto to attend a meeting of the National Women's Suffrage Association. In addition open letters from Harriet to the commission were published in the *Montreal Gazette* in early 1911, with Harriet placing further emphasis on the importance of education for women."

Shortly after, Harriet went to Rome to study at the School of St Angelo under the guidance of Dr Montessori. "On her return from Italy, Harriet was employed by the State of Massachusetts, New England, USA, where her son was living, to set up the Montessori system there. Harriet later returned to Montreal, and records show her as the principal of the Oak Lea Montessori Residential and Day School from 1916."

After Harriet's husband John died in May 1922, she travelled back to England more frequently to visit her sister Louisa in Stockport. Eventually, she moved back for good, and died there in 1939. She was cremated at Stockport Crematorium.

Megan has come across many strong women during the course of her research – some also made lives for themselves in the New World, including one who ran a ranch in California – but Harriet is clearly a highlight.

"It was incredibly special to discover Harriet on my tree, to know that you've got somebody in your family who tried to make a difference in the world, campaigning for things as important as women's rights and education. I think that's really inspiring."

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

Resources

These resources helped Megan uncover her family history

FAMILIES IN BRITISH INDIA SOCIETY

w **search.fibis.org/bin/index.php**

If you know that your ancestors lived in or passed through British India at some point in their lives, then FIBIS may be able to help you. Its database of more than two million entries from the British Library's India Office records including everything from births, marriages and deaths to wills, army records and personal papers can also be searched at Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**).

FAMILY CORRESPONDENCE

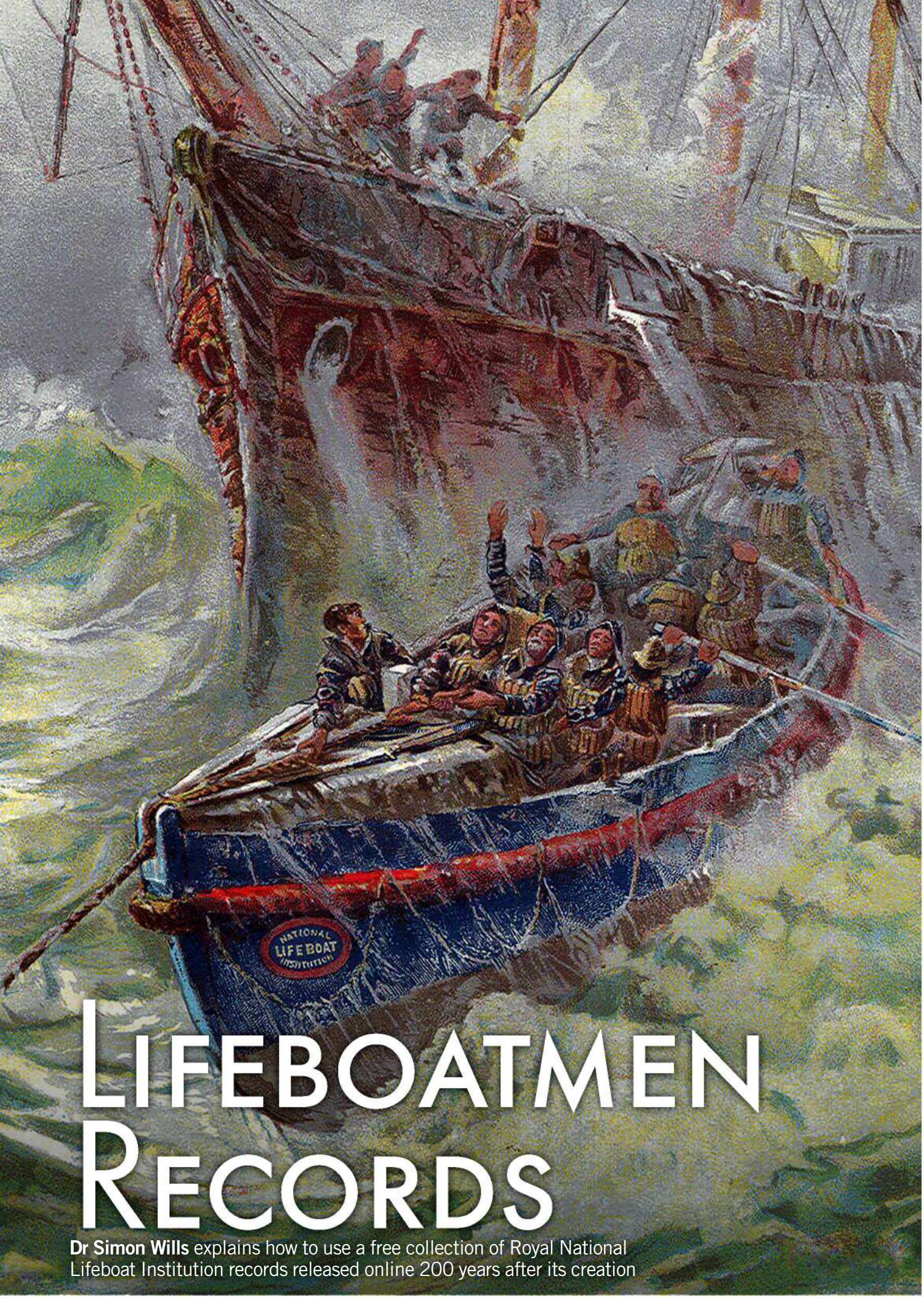
Your older relatives may have kept letters or greetings cards sent by loved ones in previous generations. Letter writing was once the main form of communication, helping people to keep up to date with each other's lives, so letters can hold a lot of information you won't find elsewhere. The one Harriet sent to Annie is a good example.

NEWSPAPERS.COM

w **newspapers.com**

You never know what you might find if you search online newspapers for a relation's name. You might be lucky enough to come across a profile of them or their obituary, which can reveal exciting new leads to follow. An article about Harriet in the *Toronto Star Weekly* revealed her whereabouts in 1911. For British titles, the British Newspaper Archive is a must: **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**.

UNP/RICHARD GRANGE



Lifeboatmen Records

Dr Simon Wills explains how to use a free collection of Royal National Lifeboat Institution records released online 200 years after its creation

SIMON WILLS

This photograph of the crew of a lifeboat at Great Yarmouth in Norfolk was taken c1910

Historically, ships have been indispensable for delivering people and cargos around the British coast, as well as connecting the UK to the rest of the world. However, shipwrecks were alarmingly frequent because of the weather, poor navigation, busy waterways, and the dubious seaworthiness of some vessels. Between 1867 and 1871, for example, there were 7,062 incidents where a ship got into serious difficulty. Of these, 2,598 ships were lost and 8,807 people died. And yet these figures relate only to vessels on the UK coastline, because statistics for areas such as the Atlantic, Mediterranean and North Sea were not collected.

For shipwreck victims, early attempts at rescue relied upon the organisation and goodwill of the local coastguard service, or on volunteer lifesaving teams. For example, fishermen in a community might band together to go out to wrecks if enough men would come forward. However, these rescuers were not properly equipped or trained, and it was often difficult to gather support quickly enough.

Fishermen might band together to go out to wrecks if enough men would come forward

Rudimentary Rescues

Quite a few coastal communities developed rudimentary lifeboat services at the beginning of the 19th century in that they had a dedicated rescue boat and a list of volunteers. Some of these locally organised services persisted for decades. The first purpose-built lifeboat was designed by Lionel Lukin in 1785, but the first man to pioneer lifeboat provision at multiple locations was Henry Greathead of South Shields who also successfully created a lifeboat and by 1811 had supplied 31 of them to various ports. These lifeboats were strong and buoyant, and would resist being turned over in heavy seas – and would right themselves again if the worst happened.

In 1822, the philanthropist William Hillary witnessed the tragic wreck of HMS *Racehorse* off the Isle of Man. Crewmen on the ship died but so did local fishermen who did their best to rescue them, leaving families with no breadwinner. Greatly moved, he advocated that the nation adopt a system of coastal lifeboat stations to ensure that communities were ready to stage properly organised rescues. His appeals to the Admiralty fell on deaf ears, so he determined to create a national charity to fund it instead.

Private finance led to the establishment of the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck in 1824. His idea captured the public's attention and earned the ruling sovereign George IV as its patron (a tradition that continues to this day), ▶

Expert Picks

Simon shares the three essential websites to research your RNLI relation

Ancestry

w **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62701**

This unique collection of 19th- and 20th-century RNLI records provides insight into lifeboat-station activity, and pensions, grants and awards bestowed upon personnel.

Lifeboat Magazine Archive

w **lifeboatmagazinearchive.rnli.org**

The RNLI's journal describes significant appointments, major rescues and awards, in addition to the installation of new lifeboats and lifeboat stations.

Life Saving Awards Research Society

w **lsars.org.uk**

LSARS's database includes details from RNLI medal rolls (1824–1996) giving name and rank, place awarded, date, wreck name, and whether Gold, Silver or Bronze Medal given.

SIMON WILLS

An RNLI lifeboat returns from a rescue mission in heavy seas, 1864

▶ and the institution grew rapidly, establishing lifeboat stations all over Britain. On 5 October 1854, during the patronage of Queen Victoria, the organisation changed its name to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).

Roles At A Station

Each station had three senior roles – the coxswain who was in charge, the assistant coxswain and the bowman. The bowman surveyed the water ahead of the lifeboat looking for survivors or wreckage, and he also had a grapnel-line to hook onto a wreck. In the 20th century the role of mechanic was added, who tended to the engines of powered lifeboats. Every lifeboat station had a list of volunteers who were called out by the firing of a rocket or mortar. Men were generally selected for a mission according to who arrived most quickly at the chosen rendezvous.

The courage of lifeboat crews was much admired, and the cause of considerable local pride. As a result the arrival of a new lifeboat often provoked a whole day of local celebration and much newspaper coverage. The fame of some lifeboat coxswains reached extraordinary heights. For example, the bravery of James Haylett from Norfolk was such that in 1902 he dined with Edward VII at Sandringham where the king presented him with the RNLI's Gold Medal. In the words of the *Norwich Mercury*, Haylett "conversed with his monarch without diffidence or restraint, bearing himself manfully and as becomes one who is really one of the greatest storm heroes England has ever possessed". Henry George Blogg (see annotated document) is the RNLI's most decorated lifeboatman, and has a museum named after him in Cromer, Norfolk. He served for 53 years, and helped to save 873 lives.

FAMILY LINK

Simon's great grandfather Richard served as an RNLI coxswain at Poole in Dorset. On one of their call-outs the lifeboat rescued the crew of a Japanese submarine.

Tracing Volunteers

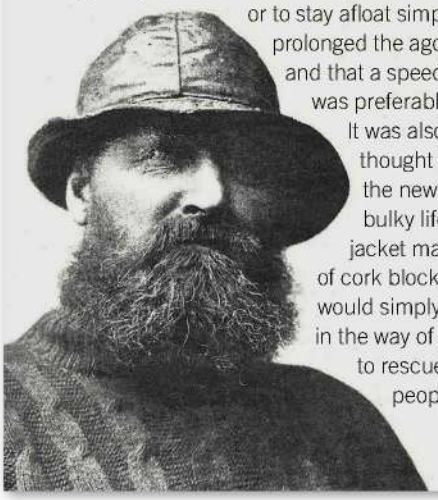
Since the RNLI is a charity and its crews are volunteers, there has never been a comprehensive set of service records for each person based at a lifeboat station. It wasn't a waged role, so you also won't usually find "lifeboatman" listed as an occupation in census records. So, to research the career of an ancestor who served on a lifeboat you will need to look in several different places. Note that crew members had to be over 18 years of age and were exclusively male until 1969, when the first woman served with a lifeboat. However, long before that time, women have often assisted with preparing and launching the lifeboat.

Generally speaking, coxswains have attracted more contemporary documentation than other members of the crew so they tend to be a little easier to track down. A good place to start is by looking at local newspapers. They typically cover every lifeboat call-out, and if the rescue attempt was particularly dramatic then it's common to find every crew member named. The press may also interview crewmen, shipwreck survivors and witnesses.

Henry Freeman 1835–1904

The story of this RNLI crew member marks a turning point in its history

When the RNLI considered introducing life jackets, the idea met with some resistance. Once someone fell in the water, it was widely held among many seafarers that attempts to swim or to stay afloat simply prolonged the agony, and that a speedy end was preferable. It was also thought that the new bulky life jacket made of cork blocks would simply get in the way of efforts to rescue people or scramble on board a boat.



However, a dramatic illustration of the life jacket's effectiveness came in 1861. A young volunteer called Henry Freeman working for the Whitby lifeboat was asked to test one out by his coxswain. On 9 February 1861, the lifeboat was called out on multiple occasions to various wrecks during a storm. On the final rescue attempt, a wave lifted the lifeboat and threw everyone aboard into the sea. Henry was on his first ever call-out, and was the only one wearing the new RNLI life jacket. He was also the only one who survived.

The loss of brave men in what became known as the Whitby Lifeboat Disaster helped to promote the benefits of life jackets, and ensured that they were more widely adopted. Henry received an RNLI Silver Medal for his bravery, and later became coxswain of the Whitby lifeboat for 22 years. He received a second Silver Medal later in his career, and is still commemorated by a bronze

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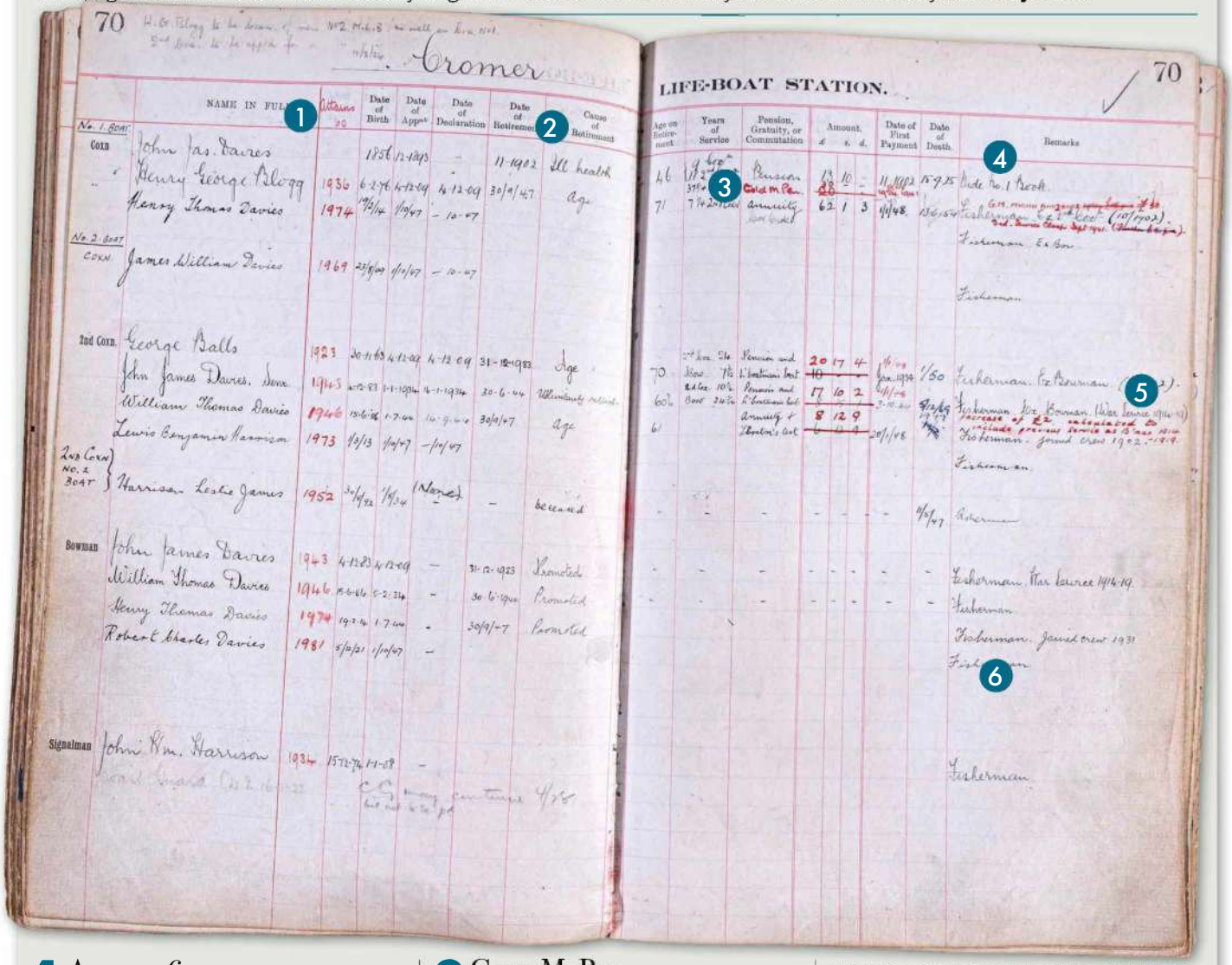
Pension And Gratuity Register

This page from the Pension and Gratuity Register 2 (1920–1948) is freely available on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**)



1 Attains 60
Lifeboatmen could claim a pension from 60 onwards. However, many continued serving after that age as can be seen in the "Date of Retirement" column to the right.

2 Cause Of Retirement
Most lifeboatmen retired due to age, but death and ill health are also mentioned. The register was usually updated upon the death of the recipient of a pension.

3 Gold M. Pen.
Henry George Blogg was the most decorated lifeboatman, and his Gold Medal entitled him to a higher-level pension. Most men were also awarded a certificate of service. Details of awards can be found elsewhere in the collection.

4 Vide No. 1 Book
The instruction "Vide [see] No. 1 Book" refers to the Pension and Gratuity Register 1 (1898–1921) also on Ancestry, which has more details on John Davies.

5 War Service 1914–19
John Davies' service in the First World War is mentioned in the "Remarks" column.

6 Fisherman
While fisherman was the most common occupation for lifeboatmen, other recipients recorded in this register have different jobs.

Plenty of rescues reached the national press as well. Another advantage of using historic newspapers is that not all lifeboat services in the UK came under the auspices of the RNLI, so you might not find your forebear if you rely exclusively on RNLI records. Historic newspapers can be accessed online via the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**) and Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), and in person at local archive services.

Ancestry has now digitised a huge range of RNLI records that may provide a unique insight into your ancestor's work with the lifeboat service. 'UK and Ireland, The Royal National Lifeboat Institution Records, 1824–1989' is a large collection of documents that are described in detail at **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62701**.

▶ The RNLI supported crewmen and their families in financial difficulty whenever it could. Its registers of pensions and gratuities (c1890s–1920s) and grants to widows, orphans and persons injured (1897–1932) are included in the collection. These records may reveal dates of birth, occupations and family relationships, in addition to dates of service.

Medals And Awards

Looking for medal recipients can be a good way to start your research. Ancestry has a medal book listing recipients between 1824 and 1986 including name and rank of individual, place, date, name of wreck, and nature of award. The RNLI also issued testimonials on vellum for bravery as well as certificates of thanks, statuettes, badges, binoculars, inscribed photographs and inscribed barometers ("aneroids" in the earlier registers). The honorary presentation books (1905–2000) hold details.

Once you know the lifeboat station where your ancestor was based then you can look for information about the rescues in which they may have been involved. The Ancestry collection includes the service records for all its stations (1824–1993). These do not include information about named personnel, but they do reveal the names of wrecks attended in date order, the weather conditions and often the number of people saved.

You can sometimes find similar information by visiting the station where your relation was based as it may be displayed there on the walls, especially if the station is now a museum.

There are also many books written about individual stations – past and present – which often include lists of personnel, descriptions of rescues, and photographs.

Ancestry's collection also includes appointment books for honorary secretaries to lifeboat stations, crew cards identifying volunteers from the 1940s and 1950s, and details of legacies left to the RNLI before the mid-1920s.

The RNLI journal *The Lifeboat* began in 1852, and back issues are online at **lifeboatmagazinearchive.rnli.org**. It often mentions coxswains by name, awards of medals, and significant call-outs. The index is not entirely reliable, so search it separately by name of lifeboat station as well as ancestor's surname.

Finally, if your forebear died trying to rescue others at sea then the RNLI Memorial may assist you. It is situated near the RNLI's headquarters in Poole, Dorset, and names all lifeboatmen who have died in service since 1824, even those who did not serve on the organisation's own lifeboats. These names are also available on the RNLI's website, together with date and location: **rnli.org/about-us/our-history/rnli-memorial.**

A member of a lifeboat crew on the Isles of Scilly wearing a life jacket, c1910

GETTY IMAGES

Looking for medal recipients can be a good way to start your research

TOP TIP!

If you can't find a lifeboatman ancestor, search local records of fishermen, coastguards, yachtsmen or merchant seamen, as they often acted as volunteers during rescues.

DR SIMON WILLS died in October 2024. He was a historian and genealogist with over 35 years' experience, the author of many books including *Shipwrecks in 100 Objects* (Frontline, 2022), and a much-loved contributor to the TV series *WDYTYA?* and *WDYTYA? Magazine*

Resources

Take your research further

BOOKS

One Crew
Helen Doe
Amberley Publishing, 2024
The RNLI's official history is written by a maritime historian, who celebrates its remarkable achievements over the past two centuries.

Our Sea-Coast Heroes
Achilles Daunt
T Nelson and Sons, 1887
Daunt's book, subtitled *Stories of Wreck and Rescue by the Lifeboat and Rocket*, brings alive the gruelling experiences of lifeboatmen during the Victorian era when lifeboats had to be rowed. His book is freely available via HathiTrust (**tinyurl.com/hath-daunt**).

MUSEUM

THE HISTORIC DOCKYARD, CHATHAM, KENT ME4 4TZ
t 01634 823800
e *info@chdt.org.uk*
w **tinyurl.com/dock-rnli**
Here you can find the RNLI Historic Lifeboat Collection – the biggest collection of lifeboats in the UK, dating from the late 19th century onwards and accompanied by archive films as well as audiovisual displays.

WEBSITE

ROYAL NATIONAL LIFEBOAT INSTITUTION
w **rnli.org/about-us/our-history**
The 'Our History' section of the RNLI's site has a wealth of information about the development of the service, and links to many museums. You can also find the names of more than 800 people who died in service and are listed on the RNLI Memorial in Poole: **rnli.org/about-us/our-history/rnli-memorial**.

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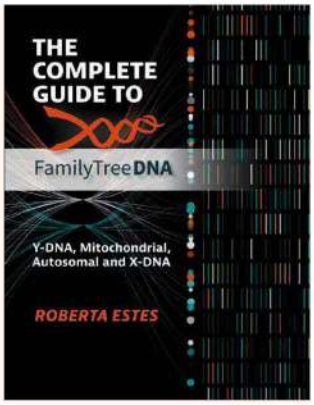
- **An extensive glossary explaining the vocabulary associated with DNA testing.**



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BEST WEBSITES

A cinema audience in 1935

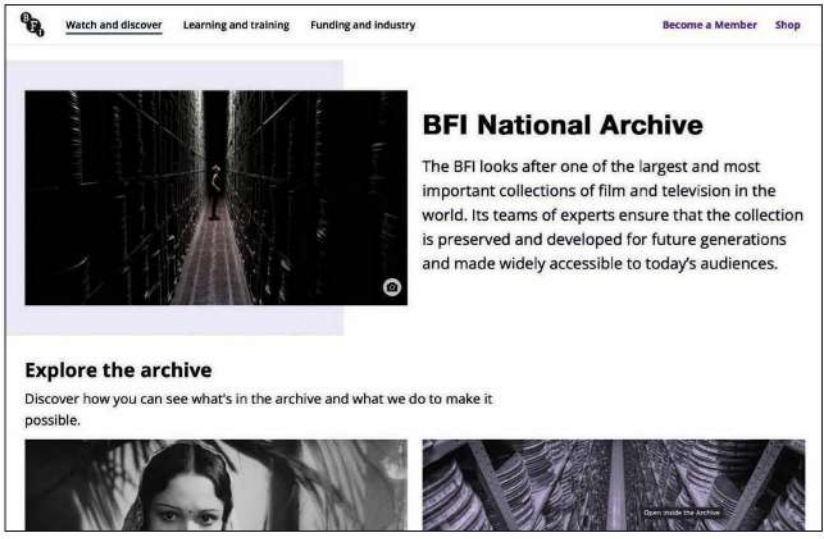
GETTY IMAGES

Jonathan Scott picks out audiovisual resources that bring the past to life

My family archive spans multiple formats, including DVD, Betamax video, reel-to-reel and cassette tape. Digitising cinefilm of my parents' wedding, seeing so many familiar faces of people no longer with us, then combining this with reel-to-reel audio from the day proved to be an unexpectedly emotional experience.

Nothing comes as close to time travel as sights and sounds from the past. Thousands of hours of footage, from cinefilms and newsreels, to footage captured by pioneers like Mitchell and Kenyon, are freely available online. Many regional archives have growing collections of oral history recordings, many of which can be accessed remotely. Hearing the reminiscences of someone who went to the same school, worked for the same firm or lived in the same street as your forebears can give you unrivalled insights into what their everyday life was like.

Indeed I spent so many happy hours ferreting through online sound archives while researching my latest book that, for the first time ever, I've made myself the guest expert.



BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE

w **bfi.org.uk/bfi-national-archive**

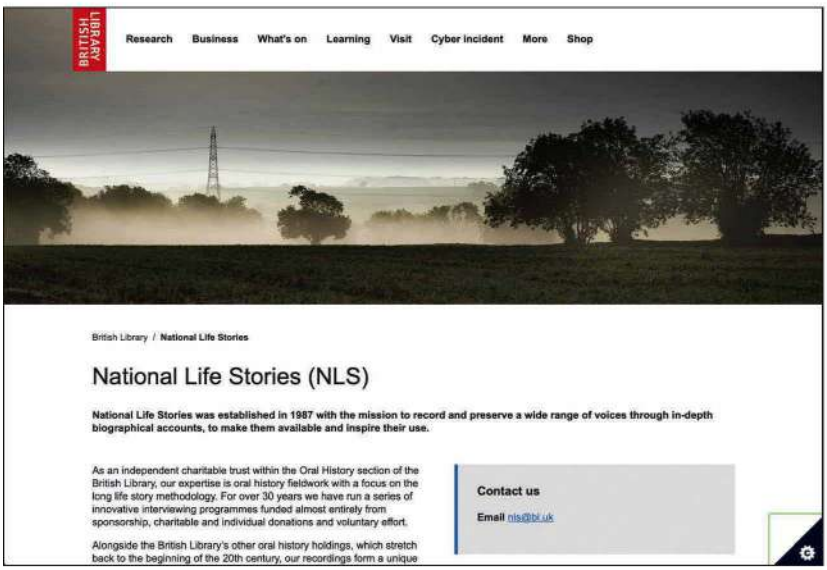
The British Film Institute looks after an unrivalled archive of British film and TV. This page details the collections you can access from home, those only available in person, as well as how the organisation goes about restoring and preserving old stock. There's BFI Replay, a free-to-access digital archive available online in public libraries, but the highlight is Britain on Film (**player.bfi.org.uk/britain-on-film**), a map that allows you to search through footage from collections across the UK. You can search by town or keyword, or explore the map to find the area that interests you, filtering by decade or subject. I chanced upon a cruise in 1950s Scotland on the steamer *Meteor*, visiting Fair Isle, Shetland, Papa Stour, Foula, North Rona, St Kilda, Mingulay, Barra and Iona.

BEST WEBSITES

MOVING IMAGE ARCHIVE

w **nls.uk/collections/moving-image-archive/**

The National Library of Scotland's Moving Image Archive looks after documentaries, public-information films, home movies and amateur films, promotional films, newsreels and regional TV broadcasts, generally held in film cans, videotapes and digital files. In total it preserves about 46,000 items, and you can access more than 3,500 clips and full-length films online. The catalogue at **movingimage.nls.uk** allows you to browse collections by place, year, subject or keyword, and you can filter by genre or format. Random searching turned up a display of Scottish country dancing in 1953, scouts unveiling a sundial in Ayrshire, and an Empire Exhibition in Glasgow.



NATIONAL LIFE STORIES

w **bl.uk/nls/**

The British Library's charitable trust National Life Stories was founded in 1987 to "record and preserve a wide range of voices through in-depth biographical accounts". Sadly, ever since the library fell victim to a cyber attack in October 2023, parts of its website have been down. Annoyingly for our topic, this includes many of the trust's recordings, the Sound and Moving Image catalogue, and indeed the entire Sounds website (**https://sounds.bl.uk**). While we wait for its return, you'll find playlists of clips on Soundcloud (**soundcloud.com/the-british-library**), and you can keep an eye on the latest news via the Sound and Vision blog (**blogs.bl.uk/sound-and-vision**).

EXPERT'S CHOICE

Jonathan Scott is the author of *Into the Groove: The Story of Sound from Tin Foil to Vinyl* (Bloomsbury Sigma, 2023)

This photo of a man recording his voice using a sound-on-film recorder was taken in the early 20th century

There's one website that I'm particularly passionate about recommending, not because it will help one iota with your research into your family tree, but because it will give you a physical connection with the past via some unique sound waves.

First Sounds (**firstsounds.org**) is a loose collective of scientists, sound historians and academics who, using 3D scanning technology, have brought back to life a host of rare recordings on all but unplayable formats.

The website seems unremarkable at first glance – it's been online for about a decade, and is not frequently updated – but I urge you to spend a few moments digging through its contents.

One of the collective's recordings that gives me goosebumps was made in London in the summer of 1888, and can be heard on the website of the Thomas Edison National Historical Park in New Jersey, USA: **nps.gov/edis/learn/photosmultimedia/very-early-recorded-sound.htm**. This was right at the start of the recording industry, when Edison's new Perfected Phonograph, which recorded sound on wax cylinders, was just hitting the market. The Triennial Handel Festival was taking place at the Crystal Palace, where an orchestra of 500 musicians and chorus of 3,000 more performed the composer's 1739 oratorio *Israel in Egypt*. One of Edison's cheerleaders, a moustachioed American named Colonel George Gouraud, installed himself in the press gallery with a Phonograph, a large acid-filled glass battery and a box full of wax blanks.

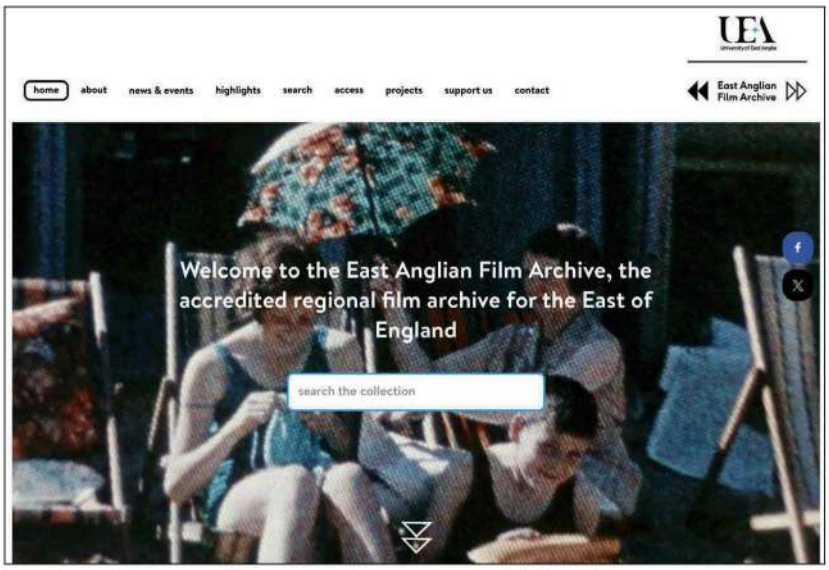
Be warned: the sound, by all modern standards, is awful, like a microphone has been dropped in a pond. But for me, that's exactly what makes the recording so powerful. In its murky depths you can hear that something beautiful is happening. It's like putting your ear to the door of 1888.

GETTY IMAGES

ORAL HISTORY SOCIETY

w **ohs.org.uk**

The Oral History Society traces its beginnings back to an informal conference held at the British Institute of Recorded Sound – which later becomes the British Library's National Sound Archive – in London in 1969. The website may both inspire your own research, and point you towards important oral history collections and current projects. The site's blog showcases stories and updates from projects all over the UK, the advice section leads to pages containing information on getting started and family history, and via Oral History Online you can explore free sections of the society's quarterly journal (**ohs.org.uk/oral-history-online**).



EAST ANGLIAN FILM ARCHIVE

w **eafa.org.uk**

The regional film archive for the east of England preserves some 12,000 hours of film and 30,000 hours of videotape, mainly covering Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Highlights include stop-motion films made by local pioneering film-maker Arthur Melbourne-Cooper, and the work of Charles Scott, who began filming celebrations, parades and annual traditions in the 1930s, producing a series of amateur newsreels called *It Happened In Norwich*. The archive also took part in the 'Unlocking Our Film Heritage' project, meaning you can access about 600 EAFA titles via the British Film Institute's aforementioned Britain on Film player.

Go Further

Another eight sites you can't afford to miss

BRISTOL LISTENING ROOM

w **collections.bristolmuseums.org.uk/listening-room/**

Here you can listen to excerpts from Bristol Museums and Archives' audio collections.

BRITISH COUNCIL FILM ARCHIVE

w **film.britishcouncil.org/resources/film-archive**

View more than 100 short documentaries exploring wartime Britain.

CITY OF LONDON PHONOGRAPH AND GRAMOPHONE SOCIETY

w **clpgs.org.uk**

You can search an index to the society's journal *For the Record* (formerly *Hillandale News*). Many issues are on the Internet Archive (**archive.org**).

ELIZABETH ROBERTS WORKING CLASS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE

w **www.regional-heritage-centre.org**

Here you can read transcripts of interviews describing working life in north-west England.

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS SOUND ARCHIVE

w **iwm.org.uk/collections/sound**

This site boasts more than 33,000 recordings.

LONDON'S SCREEN ARCHIVES

w **londonsscreenarchives.org.uk**

This wonderful research tool brings together collections held in borough archives, museums, galleries, groups and charities across the capital.

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

w **tinyurl.com/uni-leic-spe-col-emoha**

The university's site Special Collections Online has information about the East Midlands Oral History Archive, and you can browse audio recordings on work, education and migration.

WESSEX FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE

w **tinyurl.com/hants-arch-wessex**

The archive has about 22,000 film and video recordings, and 16,000 audio recordings. You can access many digitised highlights here and via **youtube.com/user/WessexFilmArchive**.

Irish National School Registers

Nicola Morris explains how to find your Irish ancestors' school records

In this 1869 *Punch* cartoon a cardinal prevents Catholic children from attending a National School with their Protestant friends

GETTY IMAGES

A system of free primary education began in Ireland in 1831 with the establishment of the Commissioners for National Education, who were tasked with allocating funds to provide free education for all children aged 5–12 years old. By 1845 the Commissioners were providing financial support for already established schools, and for the building and staffing of new schools. Their intent was to provide free secular education for all denominations, with religion taught separately – an approach that was not popular with any of the established faiths in Ireland. Although the Church of Ireland chose to remain partly outside of the Commission, the Roman Catholic church embraced the opportunity and established numerous schools, with funding from the Commissioners, that were Roman Catholic in all but name.

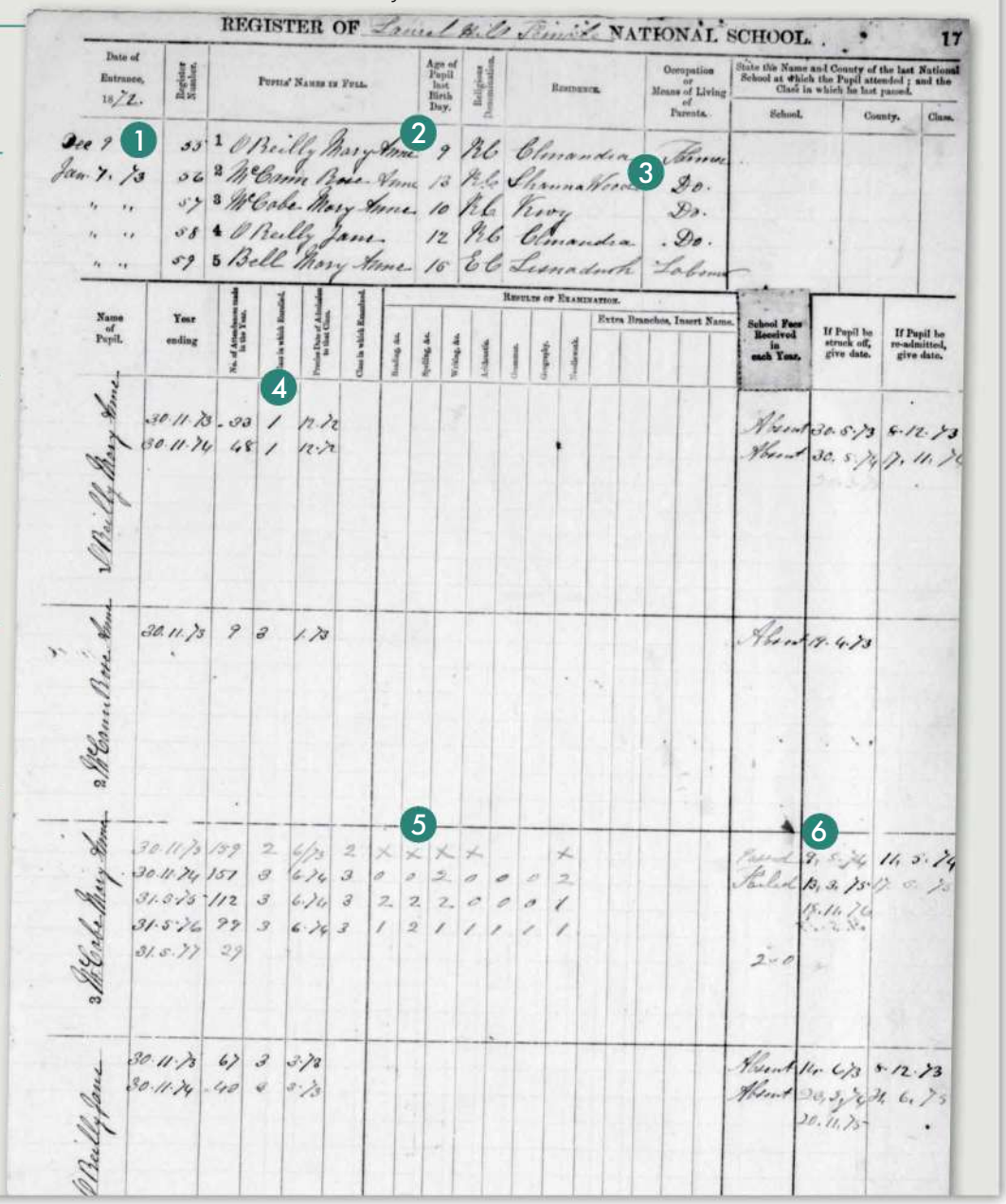
Resulting Records

The construction and operation of Ireland's National Schools was closely administered. They were built to specific plans, and regularly inspected. The vast legacy of paperwork pertaining to the administration of Ireland's 19th-century National Schools can be found in the National Archives of Ireland (NAI; **nationalarchives.ie**).

What is largely missing from this collection are the pupil roll books and admission records, which belong to the schools in question. For some schools that closed, pupil records were deposited with the Department of Education, and made their way to the

School Register, 1872

This register of pupils at Laurel Hill Female National School in the parish of Currin, County Monaghan, is held by the National Archives of Ireland (**nationalarchives.ie**) and widely available online



1 Date Of Entrance
The date that the child was enrolled is given here.

2 Pupil's Names
The name, age and religion of each pupil are recorded. Ages of children this young are likely to be relatively accurate, because there was little scope for error.

3 Residence
The townland address of the pupil's family and parents' occupation are given, including "widow" for widowed mothers. If a widow worked then her occupation may be recorded on the register instead.

4 Class
The class in which each of the pupils was enrolled is noted, including if they were repeating a year.

5 Results
You can see which subject each pupil studied, and their examination results.

6 Other Information
There are records of whether a pupil passed, failed or was absent, with dates of absence. These would suggest that the childhood had to leave school to work at home.

NAI. Other pupil records were privately donated to the NAI, but the vast majority from the 19th and early 20th centuries are with the school, were deposited with a local or county archive, or are lost.

Note that records for schools now in Northern Ireland are in local custody or held by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI; **nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/public-record-office-northern-ireland-proni**).

Pupil roll books and admission registers generally include the name, date of birth or age, and religion of the pupil, and frequently record their home address, father's occupation and previous education as well. Since these records were updated during the pupils' tenure, they provide invaluable insight into their attendance in addition to their academic attainment.

Online Collections

The small number of pupil records that were deposited with the NAI have been digitised and published online by Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62023**), FamilySearch (**familysearch.org/search/collection/4496116**) and Findmypast (**search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/ireland-national-school-registers**). This is the same collection, with some discrepancies, on all three websites. Findmypast has ostensibly documented the most pupils with 190,000, while Ancestry is at just under 160,000 entries; but the difference is likely due to the date ranges given, ▶

These girls are being taught lacemaking at a school in 19th-century Dublin

which seem to be based on incorrect information.

Findmypast reports that its collection covers 1860–1922, Ancestry says 1847–1933 and FamilySearch 1847–1954. However, according to the three websites' catalogues the earliest registers they hold all come from the National School of Headfort in County Cavan and commence in 1847; but on inspection, they only begin in 1874. The earliest pupil records seem to date from the 1820s and pertain to Brackloon School in County Mayo, but this appears to be another error as the registers cover a period in the 1920s. The next earliest record is a page in the Drumkerl National School registers billed as dating from the 1870s, which in fact relates to Drumkerl Evening School in October 1847. Those attending were outside of the age range for National School pupils, being between 13 and 29 years old.

The actual earliest registers documenting children are from Glassleck Female National School in County Cavan, which commence in 1853 and record the name of the pupil, their month and year of birth, religion, residence, parents' occupation, and the reason they left the school. The first pupil left to assist her parents, which was the case for many attending school in 19th- and early 20th-century Ireland. The school appears to have been multidenominational, with Presbyterian, Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic pupils all in attendance.

Alternative Sources

Other websites contain records of National School pupils. At the Irish Family History Foundation's site RootsIreland (**rootsireland.ie**), 19th-century records for about 40 schools in Monaghan have been indexed. Also some county archives have digitised the pupil records they hold, and published them online. Catalogues like the Irish Archives Resource (**iar.ie**) and Sources for Irish Women's History (**irishmanuscripts.ie/womenshistorysources/index.php**) can be searched, among other larger catalogues, for pupil records in local, county and smaller archives.

If you can't find the records you need online, contact the school, county archive, or local historical or genealogical societies to ask which records survive and where they are held.

TOP TIP!

National Schools were named for the townland in which they were located, and appear on Ordnance Survey maps so you can identify a relation's school: **tinyurl.com/geohive-maps**.

Resources

Don't miss these websites

BOOK

Essays in the History of Irish Education
Brendan Walsh
Palgrave Macmillan, 2016
This book examines the development of education in Ireland. A preview is available on Google Books at **tinyurl.com/ggl-bks-essays** and some chapters are online, including Chapter 2 (**tinyurl.com/maynooth-uni-essays**) and Chapter 14 (**tinyurl.com/researchgate-essays**).

MUSEUM

ULSTER FOLK MUSEUM
a **153 Bangor Road, Cultra, Holywood BT18 0EU**
t 028 9042 8428
e *info@nationalmuseumsni.org*
w **ulsterfolkmuseum.org/stories/national-school**
The museum is home to a restored 19th-century National School.

WEBSITE

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF IRELAND
w **nationalarchives.ie/topics/Nat_Schools/natschs.html**
The NAI's guide to the sources it holds is a must.

NICOLA MORRIS is an Irish genealogist, the director of Timeline Research (**timeline.ie**) and has appeared on numerous episodes of *Who Do You Think You Are?*

GETTY IMAGES

Q&A

Our team of experts offers tips and inspiration Edited By Claire Vaughan

Debbie Kennett is the author of *DNA and Social Networking*

Antony Marr is a fellow, and previous chair, of AGRA and a former deputy registrar

Chris Paton is an author, tutor, genealogist and researcher

Rebecca Probert is professor of law at the University of Exeter

Jayne Shrimpton is a professional dress historian and portrait specialist

Phil Tomaselli is a military family history expert and author

Peter Towey is vice-president of the Anglo-German Family History Society

Why did my family move so much during the Second World War?

Q At the start of the Second World War my father, James Aitchison, was a stretcher-party Air Raid Precautions (ARP) member for Sutton and Cheam, Surrey. In October 1940, the family home was bombed and they travelled to Glasgow to stay with relatives. Around 1941/2, they moved to Seascale, Cumberland. Here, James was involved with the explosives manufacturing plant (TNT) at Drigg, where we think he was working on camouflaging the plant. The family moved to Sherwood, Nottinghamshire, around 1943. In 1945 they returned to Sutton for the rebuilding of their home. Why did they move around so much?
Aileen Gilchrist

A The threat of aerial bombardment was taken extremely seriously in the Second World War, Britain having been bombed by Zeppelins and aircraft during the First World War, and damage in Spain during the Civil War (especially Guernica) was carefully studied. Cities couldn't be hidden (as Coventry discovered) but Key Points (factories, power stations, oil storage and even runways) might be disguised. Without today's guidance systems, exact targeting had to be done by eye – and deceiving the eye might, at least, minimise the damage inflicted.

I found your father on the 1939 Register, where he is described as an "Industrial designer, textiles, murals, lettering". The word "murals" is the key here. New buildings might be painted to look old, to blend into their surroundings or disguise their shape. The Drigg plant, on the coast, was probably painted to blend into the landscape from the sea, and the other way around. Whole manuals were written on this subject alone. In 1943, I suspect that your dad was sent to Nottingham to disguise a new secret oilfield discovered and developed, with US help, in Sherwood Forest, using netting and paint. The oilfield produced more than three million barrels of oil during the war.

Your dad probably worked for the Ministry of Home Security's Camouflage Directorate, which employed camouflage artists, and the 1941 Essential Work (General Provisions) Order allowed for the direction of skilled workers to wherever they were most needed. Once he was recognised for his abilities, your father had to go where he was sent; on the upside, the pay was probably good.

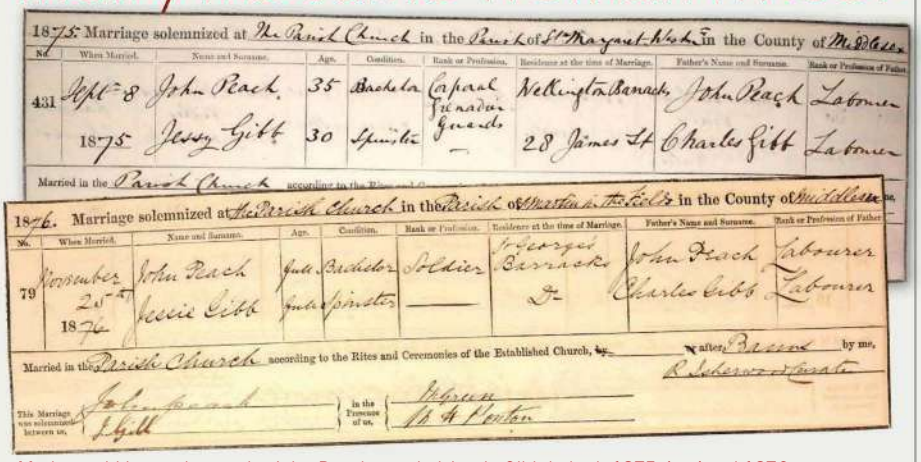
There isn't much online about Drigg, but basic details are at the Heritage Gateway: **tinyurl.com/heritage-gateway-drigg**. You can find out more about the Nottingham oilfield at **cnet.com/culture/the-roughneck-us-cowboys-who-drilled-britains-secret-wwii-oil-wells/**. A Google search for "Historic England camouflage WW2" produces some excellent general articles too.
Phil Tomaselli

Aileen's father James Aitchison in his ARP uniform

HAVE YOU HIT A BRICK WALL? Please email your questions or family photographs to the following address: **wdytyaquestions@ourmedia.co.uk**

If selected, your query will be answered on these pages. Please note that we receive a large volume of correspondence each month, and cannot reply to each message individually. You are more likely to receive a response if you keep the question and background information concise (no more than 150 words), with a clear goal of enquiry.

Why did my great great uncle marry the same woman twice?



1875 Marriage solemnized at The Parish Church in the Parish of St Margaret-with-St John in the County of Middlesex

No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
431	Sept 8 1875	John Peach	35	Bachelor	Caporal Grenadier Guards	Wellington Barracks	John Peach	Labourer
		Jessy Gibb	30	Spinster	—	28 James St	Charles Gibb	Labourer

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by me, [illegible]

1876. Marriage solemnized at the Parish Church in the Parish of Martin-in-the-Fields in the County of Middlesex

No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
79	November 25 1876	John Peach	full	Bachelor	Soldier	St George's Barracks	John Peach	Labourer
		Jessie Gibb	full	spinster	—	Ditto	Charles Gibb	Labourer

Married in the Parish Church according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by Banns after Banns by me, R Isherwood Curate

This Marriage was solemnized between us, John Peach, Jessie Gibb in the Presence of us, Wm Green, W A Penton

Marie would love to know why John Peach married Jessie Gibb in both 1875 *(top)* and 1876

Q My great grand uncle, John Peach, was born c1840 and joined the Grenadier Guards sometime before 1861, by which time he was a private living in Windsor. He married Jessie Gibb at St Margaret's Church, Westminster, on 8 September 1875 following the publishing of banns. He then married her again on 25 November 1876 at St Martin-in-the-Fields, again after banns. On the second marriage certificate, they are still listed as being bachelor and spinster. Why did they marry twice?
Marie Gray

A There are many reasons why a particular couple might go through two marriage ceremonies – for example, if the first marriage was discovered to be void for some reason, or if it had been kept secret from family and friends. However, the most likely reason for John and Jessie to repeat their marriage ceremony relates to his profession as a soldier. Soldiers needed permission to marry from their commanding officer. Without this, a wife would not be recognised by the Army for certain purposes.

Permission to marry was not given lightly. It would only be granted after a certain length of service, and depended on the good conduct of both the soldier and his intended wife. In addition, only a limited number of soldiers in each regiment – about 6 per cent – were permitted to be married at any given time. Wives to whom permission had been granted were referred to as being 'on the strength'. As a result, it was not uncommon for soldiers to have two ceremonies.

So we can assume that John obtained permission from his commanding officer between September 1875 and November 1876. After the second ceremony, Jessie could live in army accommodation.

Even if John had not had permission to marry Jessie in 1875, their marriage would still have been valid. Their 1876 ceremony would simply have been to ensure that he had a marriage certificate that postdated the grant of permission, and so allowed his wife to follow the regiment 'on the strength'.
Rebecca Probert

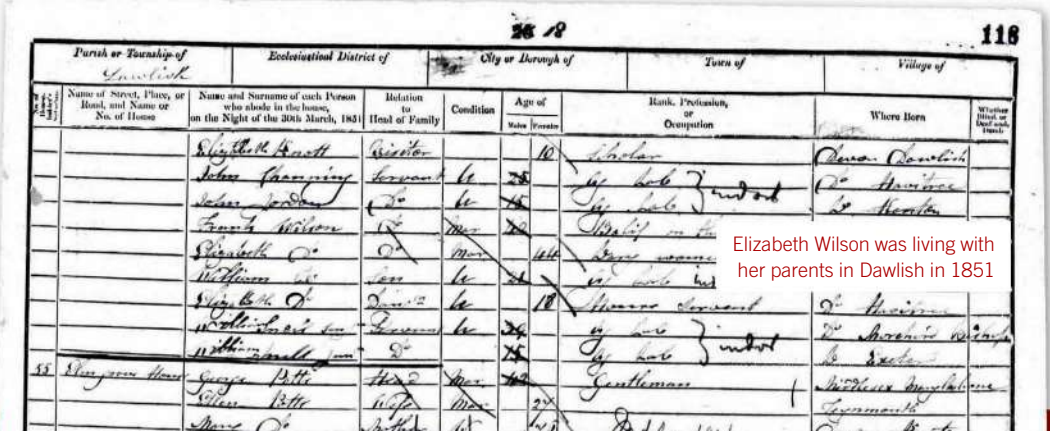
Where did Elizabeth Wilson disappear to?

Q My great great grandmother, Elizabeth Wilson, was baptised in 1832 in Heavitree, Exeter. In the 1851 census, she was at Gatehouse Farm, Dawlish, with her parents (Francis and Elizabeth), servants. In 1856, she had a son, Francis. No father is recorded but relatives believe it was Edward Baldwin Courtenay of Powderham Castle. In 1861, Francis is with his grandparents and the only plausible record for Elizabeth is in Tormoham, Torquay, as a lady's maid. I can't find her after that. Can you help?
Janet Crowder

A I have reviewed the details you gave of Elizabeth, but lose her after the baptism of Francis at Exminster in December 1856. I don't think the lady's maid in Tormoham in 1861 is likely to be her; the census entry seems to cover a large house party with numbers of servants and high-status guests. Since she was said to be born in Exeter, it might be her but there are no other useful clues. You could try researching all of the guests, but Elizabeth might have been a local girl brought in to help out.

I have looked at her parents in later censuses, her brother William (born 1830) and Elizabeth's son Francis. But she does not appear in any of their census entries up to the 1900s. The Elizabeth Wilson, born 1832 and died 1904, turns out to be her brother's wife. I cannot find another likely death in Devon.

The family lived on the western bank of the River Exe in Kenton, Dawlish, Cofton and other villages, just over the river from Powderham. Edward Baldwin Courtenay, 12th Earl of Devon, was born in May 1836, so would have been about 20 when Francis was conceived. I can't find any records suggesting he fathered any illegitimate children, but if you have any evidence it would be worth pursuing. I recommend that you take a DNA test and see if there is a group among your matches that you cannot otherwise place. Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk/dna**) has by far the largest database.
Peter Towey



118

Parish or Township of [illegible] Ecclesiastical District of City or Borough of Town of Village of

Name of Street, Place, or Road, and Name or No. of House	Name and Surname of each Person who abode in the house, on the Night of the 30th March, 1851	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of Males	Age of Females	Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Whether Blind, or Deaf and Dumb
	Elizabeth H Heath	Visitor			10	Scholar	Devon Dawlish	
	John Channing	Servant	M	25		Ag Lab	Do Heavitree	
	John Jordan	Do	M	25		Ag Lab	Do Heavitree	
	Francis Wilson	Do	Mar	20		Baker	Do Exeter	
	Elizabeth Do	Do	Mar		44	Farmer's wife	Do Heavitree	
	William Do	Son	M	21		Ag Lab	Do Do	
	Elizabeth Do	Daur	M		18	Farmers Servant	Do Heavitree	
	Wallis Snell	Servant	M	24		Ag Lab	Do Heavitree	
	William Snell	Do	M	25		Ag Lab	Do Do	
55	Thomas Hooper	Head	Mar	42		Gentleman	Middlesex Marylebone	
	Georgiana Do	Wife	Mar		37		Somersetshire	
	Mary Do	Daur	U		21		Do Do	

Elizabeth Wilson was living with her parents in Dawlish in 1851

Picture Analysis

Can you date this wedding photograph?

Q This unmounted photo measuring 10 inches x 4 inches has nothing on the back. The groom could be one of four brothers, which would make the date 1895–1912. I would be delighted if this could be narrowed down.
Bryon Mason

A This large-format photograph, perhaps taken by an amateur, bears no useful written or printed information, so the only evidence is the image. A modest wedding scene depicting a bridal party and guests in a yard-like space in an urban district, this photo is closely dateable from the appearance of its subjects. Everyone is dressed smartly and fashionably, yet not ostentatiously. Like the other women, the bride and any female attendants chiefly wear good feminine daywear; the groom and male guests sport respectable regular three-piece lounge or business suits. There are no elaborate white bridal gowns, special bridesmaids' attire or formal hired morning suits.

The women's hairstyles, blouses and skirts, especially, and the style of the girls' frocks and men's clothes indicate a firm date range of 1910–1914, according with the last of the four weddings in 1912. That later marriage is also perhaps reflected in the relative dearth of older relatives, yet the presence of several children: probably older siblings' offspring.
Jayne Shrimpton

1 SEPARATES
Separate blouses and skirts were widely worn in the early 1910s, but more traditional, dark one-piece gowns are worn by two mature women, seated left and standing (second row).

2 BLOUSES
Most women wear semi-formal blouses with high, tight necklines – the last vestige of constricting Edwardian fashion before they grew outmoded.

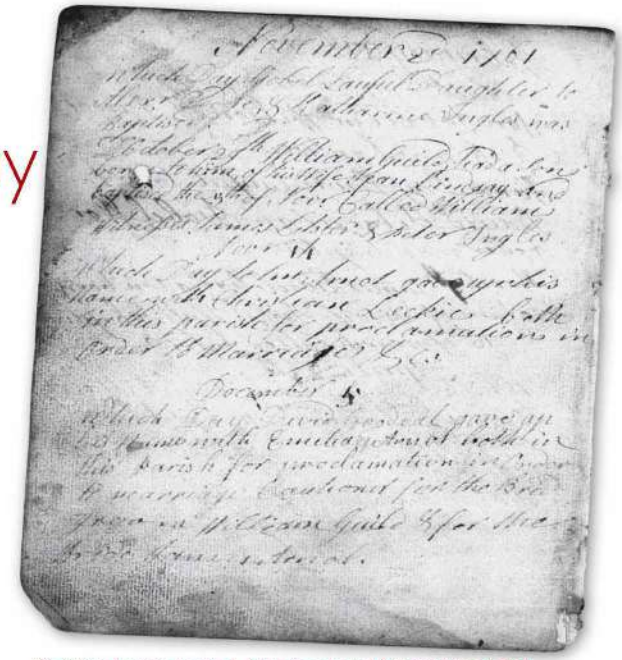
3 SKIRT
The bride's skirt, seen clearly, displays the fashionable narrow style with ornamental and fastening buttons that characterised the 'hobble skirt' of the early 1910s.

4 FEMALE OUTFITS
Before the First World War female outfits were often layered, as seen in the bride's and others' double-sleeved blouses and two girls' dark frocks over contrasting blouses.

5 WOMEN'S HAIR
The bride and many other women display typical late-Edwardian hairstyles, centrally or side-parted with long tresses softly raised into wide swathes above the temples.

6 SHIRT COLLARS
Most men wear fashionable stiffly starched turned-down shirt collars; several, including the groom, have a white necktie reserved for special occasions.

Which Christian Leckie did my 4x great grandfather marry?



Christian Leckie married John Arnot on 14 November 1761, but she is proving to be a brick wall for her descendant Gilly

Q My 4x great grandparents, John Arnot and Christian Leckie, married on 14 November 1761 in Auchtertool, Fife, Scotland, with their children all born around Aberdour in Fife. A Christian Leckie was born on 6 December 1741 in Dunfermline, Fife; her parents were Hendrie Leckie and Margaret Sprott. A second was baptised on 27 July 1743 in Falkirk, Stirlingshire, to a James Leckie and Margaret Blair. A Christian Leckie also married James Hutton on 16 December 1762 in Dunfermline, Fifeshire. Which was the Christian Leckie that John married?
Gilly Mathieson

A There's never an easy way to resolve this, due to the vague details of baptisms recorded in Scottish Old Parish Registers.

The Scottish traditional naming pattern could help. Looking at the children of Christian Leckie and James Hutton in Dunfermline, for example, their eldest daughter, Margaret, was born in 1763, and their second eldest son, Hendry, was born in 1768. With the first daughter traditionally named for the mother's mother, and the second son named for the mother's father, it suggests that this Christian Leckie may be the one born in 1741 in Dunfermline to Hendrie Leckie and Margaret Sprott.

Christian Leckie and John Arnot had nine children in Auchtertool and Aberdour, with their eldest daughter Christian born in 1786, and the second eldest son, James, born in 1766. These may be Christian's parents' names; however, there are many reasons why a naming pattern may not be correctly implemented, if used at all. Their children's baptism records may also list the names of witnesses who, with luck, may be other members of Christian's family.

I would also examine the kirk-session records at the time of her marriage, and check to see if there were other denominations in the area where your Christian lived, since not all church records are on Scotland's People (**scotlandspeople.gov.uk**). Or Christian came from an area where the register has been lost.

Finally, check additional sources for any Leckies in the area she lived, such as wills and services of heirs records, to see if Christian might be named here also.
Chris Paton

TOP TIP Scottish Old Parish Registers (or OPRs as they are often known) comprise of records kept by the Church of Scotland before the introduction of civil registration in 1855. Keep in mind some people did not follow the Established Church.

Am I related to the Bolands of Ireland?

Q I know little about my great grandmother, Elizabeth Osborn, other than that her mother was a Boland. When I did a DNA test, I found lots of matches with Bolands from second-third cousins – up to fifth-eighth cousins in the same vicinity as my family in Stepney, London. These Bolands are from County Cork, Ireland. Are they my biological family? I have 40 per cent Irish in my DNA; however, my tree goes back to the 1700s on all lines except this one, and I have found no Irish ancestors.
Kathleen Jones

The online tools at DNA Painter can help you work with your matches

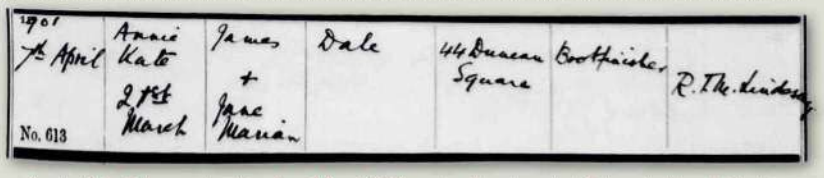
A If you are matching with second and third cousins, they are your biological relations and you share a common ancestor. Your 40 per cent Irish component suggests more than one connection to Ireland, but you'll only get the answer by working with your matches.

The key to doing this with AncestryDNA (**ancestry.co.uk/dna**) is to sort matches into groups using the Shared Matches tool. Start with a known cousin such as a second cousin. Add a coloured square to all those who match both you and this cousin. Repeat this for all matches down to 30 cM, and the clusters will represent the different branches of your tree. You first need to check that your identifiable matches on known lines match your genealogical tree. The Boland cousins will probably form a distinct cluster and won't appear as shared matches with known relatives in other parts of your tree.

To work out your Boland link, start with the highest matches and those with better trees and build their trees back to identify a common ancestral couple for everyone in the Boland cluster. Once you've identified the matches and worked out how they fit together, the WATO (What Are The Odds?) and WATO Plus tools at DNA Painter (**dnapainter.com**) can help you determine your most likely position in this tree. Then do the descendancy research to work out where you fit into it.
Debbie Kennett

Big Question

When was missing Grace Dale born?



1901 7th April No. 613	Annie Kate 2nd March	James + Jane Marian	Dale	44 Duncan Square	Bootmaker	R. Th. Lindsay

Annie Kate Dale was baptised on 7 April 1901, when the vicar helpfully noted her birthdate

CAROL GRIFFITHS is struggling to research the life of her husband's relation Grace Dale

Q I'm researching my husband's Dale family. James Dale (1866–1931, born Wolverhampton) married Jane Marion Firth (1872–1938, born Hackney, London) at Bethnal Green, London, in 1891. James was a shoe and boot finisher. Their children were Jane Emma (1892–1893), Lily Jane (1894–1974), Florence Amy (1898–1969) – all born in Bethnal Green. They also had Grace (c1899), Annie Kate (1901–1967), James Charles Albert (1904–1975), Joseph Cecil (1911–1985) and Rose Mary (1913–2006), all born in London Fields, Hackney.

I've traced details for every child apart from Grace, who is in the 1901 census with an estimated birth year of 1900. I have been unable to find her in any other census, and can't find a birth record. Can you help?

Carol Griffiths

I think James and Jane Dale had a change of heart about naming their daughter

Antony can explain why Grace is with the Dale family in the 1901 census, but can be found in no other records

A Even by 1900, a small number of births would go unregistered, sometimes in large families who seem to have registered all of their other children, so she may just have been missed. Another possibility might be a child who died soon after birth. There should be a birth and death registration in such a case, but it isn't unusual to just find the death recorded. However, I can't see any likely record of Grace dying as an infant, and she doesn't seem to have been recorded in either the birth or death register at all.

When trying to solve any such mystery in family research, it is essential to look at all of the sources available, and – whenever possible – to view images of the documents themselves instead of relying on transcribed information.

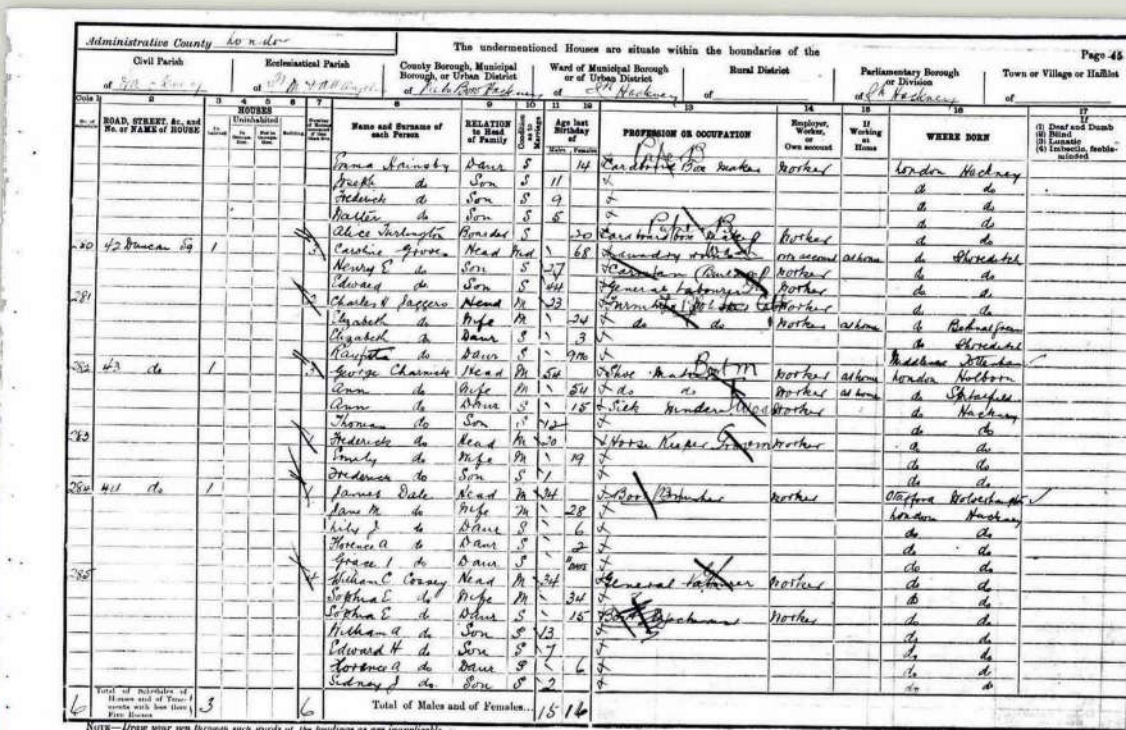
Looking more closely at the evidence you have, the family, including young Grace I Dale, are easy to find in the 1901 census living at 44 Duncan Square, Hackney, and the transcript on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) does estimate her birth year as 1900, but this is an error. The site has transcribed her age as 11 months when the image of the enumerator sheet clearly shows that she was 11 days old when the census was taken. The 1901 census was taken on 31 March, so the birth of this child can be fairly accurately dated to on or about 20 March 1901.

The 1911 census, when the family have moved to 48 Duncan Square, gives us further evidence. It records that James and Jane have had six children, of whom four are living and two have died (one of whom was Jane Emma). Joseph wasn't born until later in the year, so he can't be part of those totals. I think there was another child in the family, Amy Mary Ann Dale born in 1896, and who died aged one in 1897, which makes the figures tally but leaves no room for Grace.

The same census does list a 10-year-old daughter named Annie, who you have identified as Annie Kate (1901–1967). Her birth was registered in the April–June quarter of 1901, which is exactly when the birth of Grace should appear.

Annie Kate Dale, daughter of James and Jane Marian Dale, was baptised at St Michael and All Angels in Hackney on 7 April 1901, where the vicar has recorded her date of birth as 21 March that year. I think the only conclusion that can reasonably be drawn is that James and Jane Dale had a change of heart about naming their daughter between the date of the 1901 census and her baptism a week later. So Grace, who is recorded on that census and nowhere else, was later given the name Annie Kate Dale under which she was then registered and baptised, and who can be traced forward with the family in 1911 and beyond.

Antony Marr



Administrative County London

The undermentioned Houses are situate within the boundaries of the

Civil Parish of St Leonard Shoreditch | Ecclesiastical Parish of St Matthias | County Borough, Municipal Borough, or Urban District of Hackney | Ward of Municipal Borough or of Urban District of Hackney | Rural District of | Parliamentary Borough or Division of Hackney | Town or Village or Hamlet of

Page 45

Col. 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
No.	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES Uninhabited			Number of Rooms with face	Name and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	Condition as to Marriage	Age last Birthday of Males	Age last Birthday of Females	PROFESSION OR OCCUPATION	Employer, Worker, or Own account	If Working at Home	WHERE BORN	(1) Deaf and Dumb (2) Blind (3) Lunatic (4) Imbecile, feeble-minded
280	42 Duncan Sq	1			1	Caroline Grover	Head	Wid		68	Laundress at home	own account	at home	Shoreditch	
						Newby E do	Son	S	27		Carman (Carman)	Mother		do	
						Edward do	Son	S	24		Painter Labourer	Mother		do	
281					2	Charles & Jaggers	Head	M	23		Farm Labourer	Mother		do	
						Elizabeth do	Wife	M		24	do do	Mother	at home	do	
						Elizabeth do	Daur	S		3				do	
						Kaufman do	Daur	S		7m				Middlesex	
282	43 do	1			3	George Charnock	Head	M	54		Shoe Maker	Mother	at home	London Holborn	
						Ann do	Wife	M		54	do do	Mother	at home	do Stratford	
						Ann do	Daur	S		15	Tailoress	Mother		do Hackney	
						Thomas do	Son	S	12					do do	
283					4	Frederick do	Head	M	30		Waiter Keeper Tavern	Mother		do do	
						Emily do	Wife	M		19				do do	
						Frederick do	Son	S	1					do do	
284	44 do	1			4	James Dale	Head	M	34		Boot Maker	Mother		Clapham Wandsworth	
						Jane M do	Wife	M		28				London Hackney	
						Lily J do	Daur	S		6				do do	
						Florence A do	Daur	S		2				do do	
						Grace I do	Daur	S		0/12				do do	
285					4	William C Cosey	Head	M	34		General Labourer	Mother		do do	
						Sophia E do	Wife	M		34				do do	
						Sophia E do	Daur	S		15	Bootmaker	Mother		do do	
						William A do	Son	S	13					do do	
						Edward H do	Son	S	7					do do	
						Florence A do	Daur	S		6				do do	
						Sidney J do	Son	S	2					do do	
	Total of Inhabited Houses and of Tenements with less than Five Rooms	3			6	Total of Males and of Females			15	16					

NOTE—Draw your pen through such words of the headings as are inapplicable.

What can you tell me about this photograph?

Q My dad is standing second from left in this photograph taken during the Second World War. For part of the war he flew Spitfires, and was in 145 Squadron during 1944. I'd love to know where, when and why it was taken.
Jan Saunders

A This is a semi-formal group photograph of the pilots and other officers of 145 Squadron RAF taken in Italy, probably Treviso, after the German surrender in May 1945.

A fighter squadron, 145 Squadron fought over Dunkirk and in the Battle of Britain, and went to Italy (Sicily) in July 1943. It followed the long, slow advance up country, becoming a fighter-bomber squadron en route, until August 1945.

The main online source of information about aircrew is the contemporary Squadron Operations Record Books (ORBs), which record crew names. They can be viewed for free on The National Archives' (TNA's) website in series AIR 27 (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C2082**). Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) and Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) both have ORB series. TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**) has the collection 'RAF Air 27 Air Ministry Operations Record Books', which is easily searchable provided you use initials and surname and check the dates on the original document (which you can view).

Using "J M Anderson, 145 Squadron, Flight Sergeant" produces well over 200 mentions in 145 Squadron from 1942–1945. You can see where he flew from, who he flew alongside, his aircraft and the actions that he fought in.

You can find out how to apply for a copy of your father's service record, which should supply more detail, via this government web page: **tinyurl.com/gov-service-record**.
Phil Tomaselli

1 WAR-SERVICE DRESS

Almost all the men in the photograph wear war-service dress, introduced in 1943, comprising waist-length jacket with waist band and buckle, black plastic buttons and two pleated breast pockets with flaps covering buttons and pockets. This chap is clearly wearing cut-down flying boots!

2 STRIPES

Most are wearing the RAF wings reserved only for pilots on their left breast. Many in the back row wear visible sergeant's stripes as well – not all RAF pilots were officers.

3 OFFICERS' DRESS

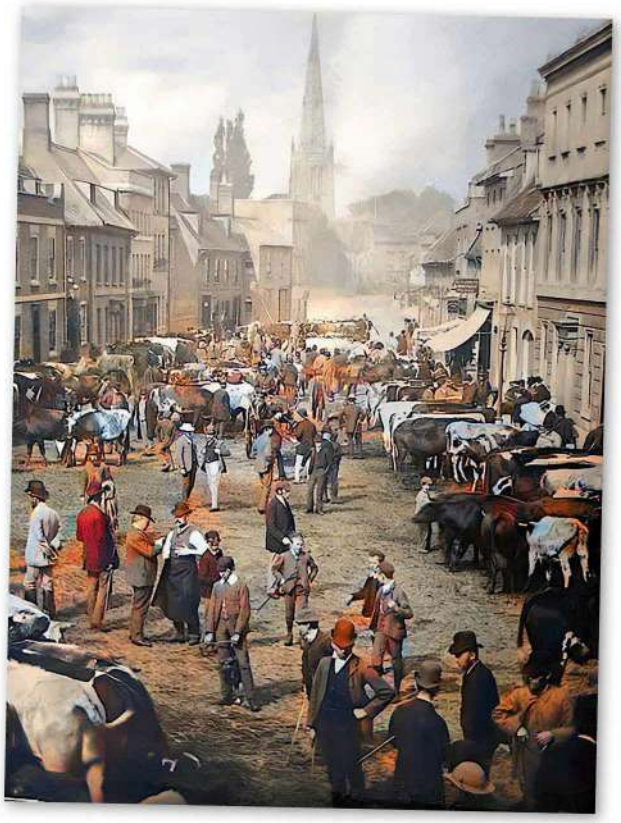
Officers are at the front of the photograph, as usual. Fighter pilot officers were allowed a certain latitude in dress. I think that the chap in the 'tank top' is Wing Commander Hugh Dundas DSO, who visited the squadron in Treviso in May 1945. Their dress suggests that it's warm, but not yet hot.

4 LOCATION

The foreground vegetation is unusual and the trees are (I am reliably informed) plum trees. Below them is what looks like a vine. This suggests they are somewhere Mediterranean.

St Ives Stories

Rosemary Collins talks to John McKinnie about a website dedicated to the history of St Ives in Cambridgeshire



The weekly livestock market in The Broadway, photographed in the early 1880s

The town of St Ives in Cambridgeshire dates back at least as far as the 11th century – it is mentioned in the Domesday Book under its original name of Slepe. In 2014, local resident John McKinnie found himself contemplating its extensive history at a ceremony marking the centenary of the First World War.

"It was quite a moving experience, but I realised that probably nobody attending the ceremony knew anything about the local men who were commemorated on the war memorial in the town square," he says. "I decided to go away and see what I could do about that. I started by researching the life story of each of the fallen, and set up a blog."

John explains that his interest in the town's history developed from there: "I originally based quite a bit of the content for the men's biographies on the information published in the articles on the British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**), which tell a story about how St Ives as a town fared during the First World War. As the project evolved, I started building an index where anybody who was interested could find newspaper articles containing a certain surname, and researching St Ives people and St Ives places outside of the 1914–1918 timeframe."

You need to consider how to share your research with the world

The site, St Ives 100 Years Ago (**stives100yearsago.blogspot.com/**), now features a wide variety of articles about the town's history, as well as the index of surnames, a photo album and guided walks.

The entries in the surname index link to such resources as newspaper articles, census records, business records and a manuscript from the 1930s created by a local resident named John Skeeles.

The entry for the surname Clack, for example, includes a Private Bert Clack, who wrote a remarkably frank letter home from the trenches that was reported in the *Huntingdonshire Post* on 28 May 1915: "I wish some of them who stick those jammy pieces in the papers about Tommy in the trenches had been in ours from Wednesday night to Thursday night… The Germans were shelling us for 24 hours without a stop."

John also updates the website regularly revealing what was happening in St Ives on this day a century or more ago, as reported in the newspapers. A recent update at the time of writing is devoted to the catch of a record-sized sturgeon in the River Ouse in 1924 that apparently weighed 185 lb.

John adds that there's much more to the town's history than people think, particularly its centuries-old livestock market that took place on Mondays.

"St Ives' market was the second biggest in the country after Smithfield, and it was effectively helping to feed London. There's a resident who remembers in his boyhood going to sleep on Sunday evenings in the summer when his windows were open to the sound of all the cattle lowing in the water meadows around the town. The market must have been a sight to behold."

John is also happy to share tips with anyone who wants to create a website to celebrate their own local history. "It's all very well to conduct a project researching your area to satisfy your own interest, but unless you communicate your findings to other people then it's something that dies in a folder kept in the back of a cupboard, and doesn't benefit anybody other than your own personal satisfaction in doing it. You need to consider how to share your research with the world."

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your local history project with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *rosemary.collins@ourmedia.co.uk*

Get Involved

St Ives 100 Years Ago
w **stives100yearsago.blogspot.com/**

If you would like to contribute to John's website, or would benefit from advice about how to set up a site of your own, please click the 'Get in Touch' button on the homepage. You can also follow the project on Facebook: **facebook.com/stives100yearsago**.

THE BIG PICTURE

Celebrating our ancestors caught on camera

GETTY IMAGES

Reasons To Celebrate

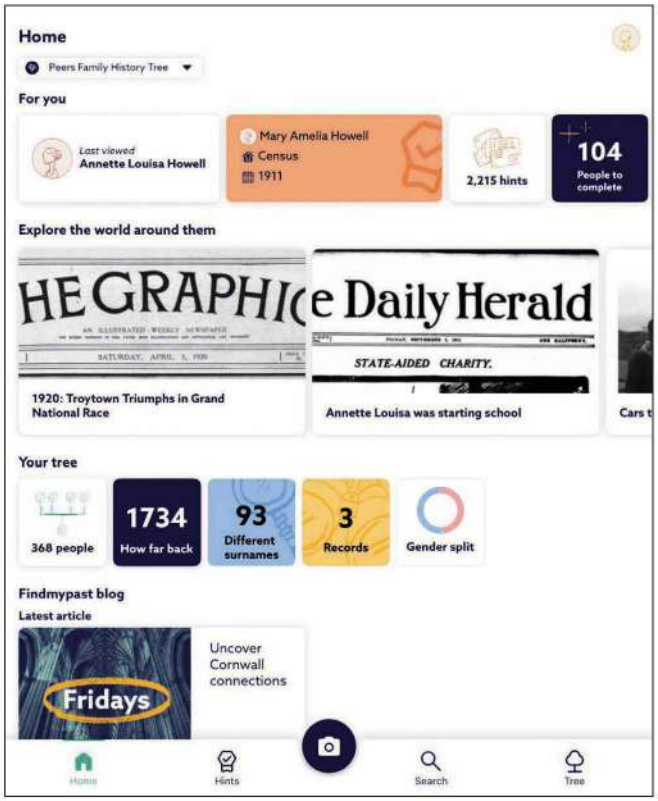
A group of boys surround a Christmas hamper at the Foundling Hospital in Redhill, Surrey, on 23 December 1932

None of us would like to spend Christmas in a hospital, but the Foundling Hospital set up by sea captain Thomas Coram in 1739 was not an institution for the sick. Its mission was to provide a home for "the maintenance and education of exposed and deserted young children".

The original 18th-century building is still situated in London's Brunswick Square and now holds a museum that tells the history of the 'hospital'. In 1926 the institution moved to a former school in Redhill, then occupied a site in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, from 1935 until the last child entered foster care in 1954 and the hospital was closed.

From the beginning there was great demand for places, with mothers around the country desperate for assistance. Indeed, for a time a monthly ballot was run. Mothers reached into a bag and pulled out a coloured ball: a white ball meant that her child was provisionally admitted; a red one saw them added to a reserve list, if an accepted child lost their place through developing an infectious illness; and a black ball meant that the child was rejected.

The organisation that the captain founded continues today as the children's charity Coram. A wide range of records from the hospital are held by The London Archives (**thelondonarchives.org**), including petition letters, admission and discharge registers, and details of apprenticeships. Thanks to a recently completed years-long digitisation project, nearly 100,000 pages of documents dating from 1739–1898, equivalent to almost a quarter of the total archive, are available to search and view for free at **coramstory.org.uk/the-foundling-hospital-archive/**. Here you can uncover the stories of 22,000 of the 27,000 children that the hospital cared for as well as details of staff, mothers and the surrogate mothers, known as 'country nurses', who looked after the babies for the first five years of their lives. Like a Christmas hamper, who knows what there is to discover!



Unlock the Findmypast mobile app's secrets

Nick Peers explains how Findmypast's mobile app can help you improve your online tree

Users of Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) will already be familiar with the many tools offered through its website. But logging into your web browser every time you want to view or update your tree or go hunting through its many record sets isn't always the most convenient way to access it.

If you have a smartphone or tablet then you'll find that the official mobile app makes accessing and updating your online tree when on the go a breeze. It's developed over the past few years to the point where it almost renders the main website redundant – virtually everything you want to do online can be done from the comfort of the app.

The interface is easy to navigate, and will be familiar to anyone who's used the website. With that in mind, we're focusing this month's 'Tech Tips' on delving into some of its unique tools, including a built-in scanner that can detect faces within photos and extract text from documents.

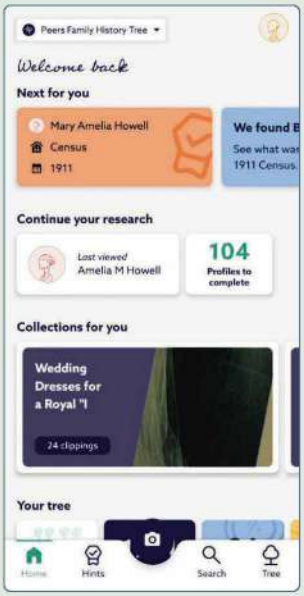
TOP TIP!

Some features – like the 'Explore' tool – haven't yet made it to the app, so access them by logging into **findmypast.co.uk** via your device's web browser.

Simply search the Google Play Store if you're an Android user or the App Store on iOS for findmypast (all one word). Once installed, open the app and log into your Findmypast account before following our step-by-step guide.

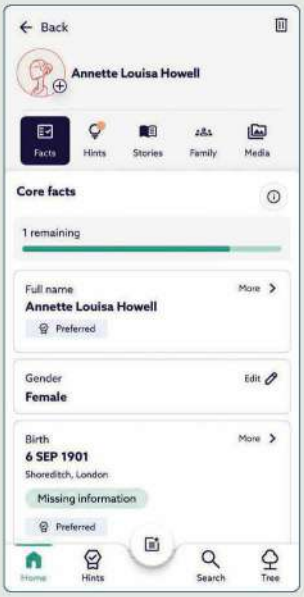
1 Review The Latest Updates

Once you're logged into the app, you'll see a welcome screen via the occasional "Take a look at what's new" pop-up, which reveals any features that have been added to the app. The 'Welcome' page itself works in a similar way to the main Findmypast website, offering suggestions for continuing your research alongside shortcuts to people featured in your tree and records to review.



2 Review Your Relations

Tap a person to access their profile page – again it's similar (but not identical) to the profile page that appears on the website. The 'Facts' tab lists what Findmypast terms 'core facts' about your relative – if any are missing, you'll see a prompt to fill them in at the top. Look for 'Missing information' next to entries to find out what you need to add.



3 View Stories

There's no 'Explore' tool in the mobile app, but you do get access to most of the options found when you view a forebear's full profile on the website. They include 'Stories', which provides a list of UK news headlines spanning your ancestor's lifetime. Each is accompanied by a newspaper article – tap the story to view the original page.

4 Share And Save Stories

If you find a story of specific relevance to your relation, tap 'Save to Profile' so the story will always be accessible via 'Stories' under 'Saved'. The Android version of the app also allows you to download, print or share the article via other apps – tap the three vertical dots in the top right of the screen to access these options.

5 Navigate Immediate Family

The app version of Findmypast has one unique feature not found on the website: a 'Family' view. Tap 'Family' to see the current person's immediate relations: their parents, siblings, partners and children. Tap one to jump to that person and explore their entry, and use the 'Back' button at the top to return to your originally selected relative.

6 View And Add Photos

One excellent reason to install the app is to make use of your mobile device's camera to quickly snap photographs and other documents, process them and then upload them to your online tree. Tap 'Media' to view any existing images, then tap the new photo button in the centre of the bar at the bottom of the screen and give the app permission to use your camera if prompted.

7 Detect Faces

Below the buttons for selecting an existing photo in your phone's camera roll and switching between front and back buttons, you'll see two additional ones marked 'Face' and 'Text'. Tap 'Face' to have the camera attempt to detect faces in the photo (they'll be enclosed in squares). Line up your shot and tap the shutter button to take the photo.

8 Tag And Upload

The photo will be processed, which can take up to a minute. Once done, the photograph and any detected faces below it will be shown. Tap on a face to assign it to a person in your tree from the list. When you've finished, tap 'Add Details' to give the image a title, description, location and date. Then tap the 'Save' button, followed by the 'Upload' button.

9 Upload Text

The 'Text' button utilises optical character recognition to scan typewritten text. When selected, line up your document and Findmypast will look for any text and display it in the viewfinder. Take your photo and after the document is processed, tap 'Add Details' to add the scanned text to the picture's description, which you can edit. Add a title and other information, and finish by uploading.

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A CHILDHOOD CHRISTMAS

Caroline Roope explores the origins of the much-loved Christmas traditions of childhood, from Father Christmas to nativity plays

As children, we look forward to Christmas as the day of Santa Claus and of presents," a journalist wrote in the *Belper News* on Christmas Eve 1896. "It holds for us a sense of delight that no other day possesses… We never enjoy Christmas so much as when, as children, Santa Claus is a real being, whose track in his reindeer sleigh lies over the snow-covered roof-tops down the chimney, ending at the hearth beside the bed where we have hung our stocking."

This sense of festive magic, encapsulated here at the end of the 19th century, is embedded in our memories of Christmases past. Whether we're harking back to the days in which we left out a mince pie for Santa or put on a pair of homemade angel wings for the school nativity play – or we're even trying to recreate some of that same magic for our own children – Christmas holds a special significance among the youngest members of the family. Many of the Christmas traditions that were introduced by our ancestors are still enjoyed today, and it is no surprise that the customs that put children at the heart of Christmas are those that have stuck around the longest.

Enter St Nick

In terms of longevity, children's favourite bringer of gifts Santa Claus – also known as St Nicholas – arguably has the strongest claim. His history is murky, however. Believed to have begun life as an old monk who helped the poor in the 3rd century, by the 16th century St Nick had transformed into a figure delivering sweets and lumps of coal to children

in the Netherlands on the eve of his saint's day – 6 December – depending on how good they had been. It wasn't long before the legend of old St Nick and his sack of presents became linked with Father Christmas, the British personification of Christmas, and the tradition of giving gifts.

A trip to see Father Christmas brought as much delight to our forebears as it does to children today. Reports of Father Christmas meeting children are commonplace in historic newspapers, but perhaps the most touching involve his visits to the sick and impoverished in the 19th century. In December 1895, the *Hull Daily Mail* described an appearance by Father Christmas at the Victoria Hospital for Children. "He was the old, familiar Santa," the eyewitness wrote, "in a red gown, with red cap, decorated with holly… he was quite fascinating! What more, then, must he have been to the little ones who had, amidst their sufferings, waited days and nights watching for the annual 'dispenser' of 'all good things'."

Stockings And Awe

The hanging of stockings to be filled with presents is shrouded in mystery too. Christmas historians have mooted Holland, Italy and Spain as possible locations of origin, but most agree that the idea of shoes or clogs as receptacles for gifts eventually led to the custom of stocking-hanging. There is also a consensus that the tradition was popularised following American writer Clement Clarke Moore's 1823 poem *A Visit from St Nicholas*, in which " 'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house / Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse; / The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, / In hopes that St Nicholas soon would be there."

Early stockings would have been nothing more spectacular than a family cast-off, but as the custom became commercialised, elaborately designed and pre-filled stockings that were bursting with sweets and toys became available. In December 1898, the *Marlborough Times* reported that a philanthropic campaign had begun to distribute thousands of stockings to "many of the poor and friendless children of the alleys and the slums… whose Christmas is a dreary and joyless day". According to the newspaper, the stockings would contain "a plain wholesome cake of a large size, a box of good sweets, an unbreakable toy, and a Christmas card".

This photo of Father Christmas drinking tea in a Lancashire department store dates from 1936

The Play's The Thing

Taking part in a school nativity play is a childhood rite of passage. Often fraught with terrifying memories of wrong lines, or worse, dropping baby Jesus, the nativity play has been part of the seasonal events calendar for centuries. The nativity story is of course central to the Christian celebration of Christmas, but as the festive season became more child-focused in the later 19th century, plays performed by children became a useful way to retell the story for both entertainment and as a reminder of its religious importance.

In the 1920s, the nativity play entered its golden age when a performance of Cornish vicar Bernard Walke's dramatisation *Bethlehem* – which was based on a medieval miracle play – was broadcast on the radio in 1926, and became wildly popular. By the end of the decade, the nativity play had become a much-anticipated part of the school calendar. Audiences had certain expectations, however. In 1929, George Street Sunday School in Burton upon Trent performed a nativity play in modern dress. The reporter for the *Burton Observer* objected to Herod's "evening clothes and cigarettes", while Mary was, shockingly, played by "a pretty girl in a frock too short to reach her knees".

In the same way that nativity

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James Edgar 1843–1909

The Scotsman who dressed up as Santa Claus

James Edgar was a Scottish businessman who is credited as being the first person to dress up as Santa Claus. Born in Edinburgh in 1843, Edgar emigrated to the USA in 1878 and set up a store in Brockton, Massachusetts.

In 1890, he had an idea that has become firmly embedded in the Christmas tradition – dressing up as Santa to entertain children visiting his store. He took American illustrator Thomas Nast's famous 1881 depiction *(pictured)* as his inspiration, and donned a red robe and white beard. Within days, children were travelling from outside the state to meet Santa.

Inevitably, the idea was copied in shops on both sides of the Atlantic, which helped to make Nast's version the most prolific representation of St Nick – appearing on cards, wrapping paper, decorations, in films, in Christmas grottos, and on many other festive objects.

Edgar fully embraced the Christmas spirit as well. Although he never had children himself, he was renowned locally for philanthropic acts such as offering jobs to young people who were in need and paying for their medical care. He died at his summer home in Lakeville, Massachusetts, in 1909.

Actors rehearse a pantomime in an 1871 engraving

plays became the domain of schoolchildren, so too did pantomimes. Pantomimes have a rich history dating back centuries, and were originally for adults – special performances for children were a rarity. But in the mid-19th century, theatres began to capitalise on the new family-centric mood of the festive season and produced children's shows every winter, drawing on fairytales and legends to capture the magic of Christmas.

The royal seal of approval was secured when Queen Victoria took her children to a performance. She commented in her journal during Christmas 1857, "We dined earlier & went with Alice, Lenchen [Helena], Louise, Bertie & Arthur to the Princess's [theatre] where we saw the Pantomime of 'Aladdin & the Wonderful Lamp', which was very good."

Pantomimes have a rich history, and were originally for adults

A nativity play at a theatre in West London, 1932

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Calendar Countdown

Many secular Christmas traditions have their roots in religious practices, particularly Advent – the period spanning the four Sundays that lead up to Christmas and culminates on Christmas Eve. What began as a period of fasting, prayer and reflection in the 3rd and 4th centuries had by the early 20th century evolved into an exciting daily Christmas countdown involving sweets, treats and opening tiny doors. In 1908 German publisher Gerhard Lang invented the first commercially printed Advent calendar. Doors that opened onto biblical verses were added in the 1920s, but it wasn't until the 1950s that the calendars became a Christmas favourite in Britain. "From the continent comes an unusual calendar for Christmas, especially for children – the Advent calendar," announced the *Leicester Evening Mail* in 1956. "It is a brightly coloured picture with sections semi-cut, each bearing a number from one to 24. These open like a little door. Behind each door is a different picture."

House Of Happiness

Germany also gifted us gingerbread houses. It has been suggested that these edible structures originated between the 16th and 18th centuries, and were popularised following the publication of the story

A gingerbread house dating from the 1950s

of *Hansel and Gretel* by the Brothers Grimm in 1812. Originally the fairytale house was made of bread and sported a cake roof, but in subsequent retellings was built out of gingerbread. Queen Victoria was known to have given her spaniel Dash "two bits of gingerbread surrounded with branches of holly and candles" for Christmas in 1833, and she continued the tradition with her children. On Christmas Eve 1856, she recorded in her journal that Prince Albert had arranged for St Nicholas to visit the children. The "formidable looking" St Nicholas "came in asking the Children, who were somewhat awed & alarmed, 'are you a good child,' & giving them gingerbread & apples".

The rest of the population could look to the newspapers, which published plenty of suitable recipes for a children's party. An article in the *Daily News* in 1936 suggested a "Hansel and Gretel gingerbread house" with piped lattice windows and even "little elves and gnomes, fixed by a dab of icing". A similar gingerbread centrepiece featured at the children's Christmas party at the Grand Hotel in Eastbourne in 1949 – although judging by the report in the *Eastbourne Chronicle* it may have been upstaged by a "large, electrically illuminated lighthouse entirely made of sugar". Guests delighted in a 20-foot Christmas tree, dancing, games, a magic show, Punch and Judy, ice cream and a tea that included "cakes, jellies and spicy buns". They were also sent home with a goodie bag containing "sweets, apples, oranges, and balloons as a memento of a very happy party".

Christmas is perhaps best enjoyed through the eyes of a young child

Magic And Mystique

Christmas is perhaps best enjoyed through the eyes of a young child, when all of the myths, legends and often baffling traditions associated with it only add to the magic and mystique. But the true essence of Christmas is something that we can all share, no matter our age: coming together to make memories of a jolly good time.

CAROLINE ROOPE is a writer and researcher specialising in social history. Her latest book is *The Real DH Lawrence* (Pen & Sword, 2024)

Resources

Take your research further

BOOKS

Christmas: A Biography
Judith Flanders
Picador, 2017
In addition to the season's history, Flanders reveals the myths and the legends, with some surprises.

Christmas Traditions
George Goodwin
British Library, 2019
Goodwin delves into the rich history of Christmas using the British Library's collections.

MUSEUM

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM
a **Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL**
t 020 7942 2000
e *hello@vam.ac.uk*
w **vam.ac.uk**
The museum's vast collection covers 5,000 years of creative and cultural history. Items related to Christmas such as cards, Advent calendars, decorations, cracker boxes and even biscuit tins can be viewed online, or in person if you make an appointment.

WEBSITES

BRITISH PATHÉ
w **britishpathe.com**
This site has many short films related to Christmas. Footage includes children hanging up their stockings in 1950 (*Filling Children's Stockings* at **tinyurl.com/bp-fill-xmas**), how stockings were made in a factory in 1935 (*We Go All Festive!* at **tinyurl.com/bp-go-fest**) and many reels showing Father Christmas arriving by plane, train, ship and even parachuting into France in 1938.

BRITISH NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE
w **britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**
Christmas and all the excitement around it has kept the press in business since the 18th century. Search for stories featuring Santa, stockings, nativity successes and blunders, and traditional recipes.

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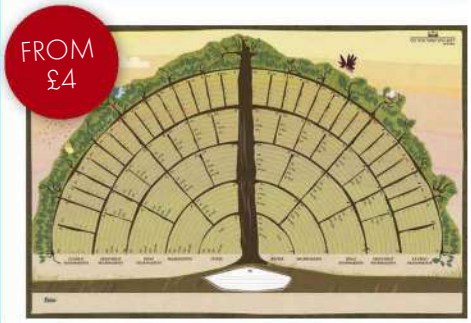

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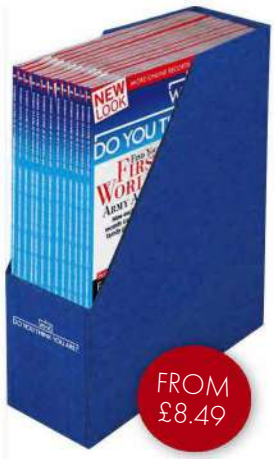

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'It Took Me 40 Years To Uncover The Details Of My Father's Fate'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

Arnold Kremenstein was living in France with his parents and older brother in 1940 when the country fell to the Nazis and the persecution of Jews began. He told **Gail Dixon** what happened next, and how he researched his father's fate

My mother Esther Kremenstein (née Block) was born in Stepney, East London, in 1903. Her parents were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, and she had five siblings.

She worked as an accountant at the Deepdene, a fashionable hotel in Dorking, Surrey, where she met a French-Jewish family by the name of Posner.

In 1931 Mother moved to Paris to teach their daughter English, and was introduced to my father Joseph Kremenstein. He had been born in Aleksandria, Poland, and moved to France in 1924 to study chemical engineering at the University of Poitiers. They married on 17 March 1932.

ARNOLD KREMENSTEIN is retired and lives in Maidenhead, Berkshire. He has been researching his family history for over 30 years

My older brother Gérard was born in Paris in 1935, then my parents moved to Châlette-sur-Loing, about 40 miles east of Orléans in the Loiret department, where I was born in 1939. Father worked in the laboratories of the Hutchinson rubber company.

In June 1940, France fell to the Nazis and they began introducing antisemitic laws. Father lost his job, and bicycles and radios were confiscated. At the time Mother was pregnant, and my brother Fernand was born in March 1941.

Father's Arrest

Deportations from France began in 1942, and on 26 June that year French police came to our home and arrested Father. He was taken to the internment camp of Beaune-la-Rolande in Loiret.

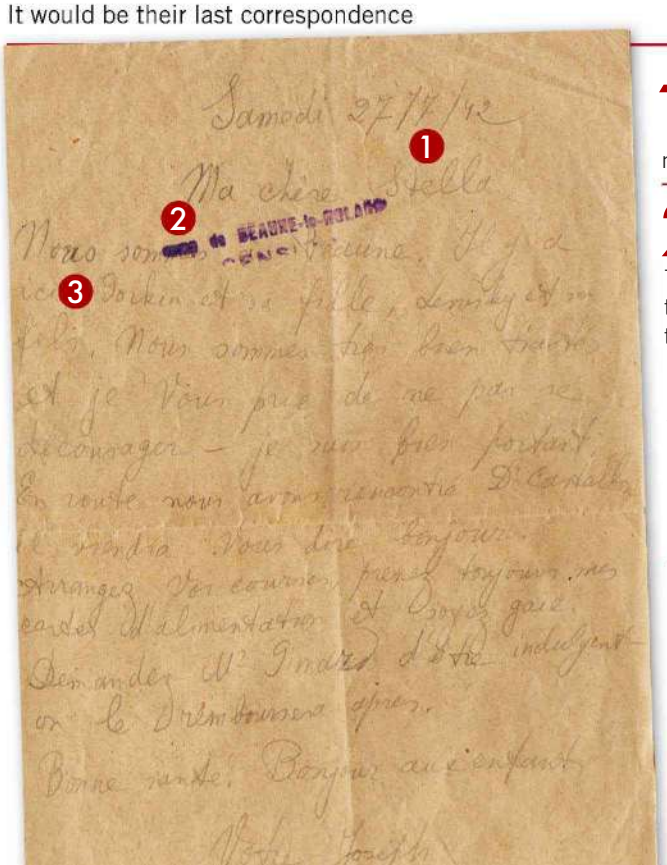
After Father's arrest, Mother was reliant on friends and neighbours for food and firewood. People would leave small sums of money or messages behind our shutters. She had to bring up three children with the constant fear of arrest, and try to discover what had happened to Father.

In February 1944, the local priest L'Abbé Crespin sent word that we were about to be arrested,

Left to right: Arnold with his older brother Gérard and younger brother Fernand

Last Letter, 1942

Arnold's father Joseph Kremenstein wrote to his wife Esther while he was imprisoned. It would be their last correspondence



1 Stella
This was Joseph's pet name for his wife.

2 Beaune-la-Rolande
The stamp confirms that Joseph was held in the internment camp in Beaune-la-Rolande. Note the addition of the word *"censure"*, which reminds us that all of the correspondence sent into and out of the camp was subject to censorship.

3 Gorkin
Joseph mentions the names of fellow detainees the Gorkins and Levinskys, who were also deported.

Arnold's beloved parents, Esther and Joseph Kremenstein

so we fled and took refuge in the house of Suzanne Drées in Clémont-sur-Sauldre, 30 miles south-east of Orléans. We stayed there until the liberation of Paris in August 1944.

None of my account conveys my parents' horror, fear, anxiety and humiliation.

In November 1945, Mother decided to return to Britain and we lived with our grandparents in Stepney. She looked after three young boys, her father and invalid stepmother with little help from her family. We still didn't know what had happened to Father.

In 1946, my brothers and I were placed in the Norwood Jewish orphanage in South London, and Mother moved into a bedsit. I spent eight years at the orphanage, and had a Jewish upbringing in a caring environment. I'm very grateful to Norwood, and look back on my time there with fondness. The four of us were reunited as a family some years later.

We didn't discover Father's fate until 1963, when Mother heard from the Office National des Combattants et Des Victimes de Guerre. They informed us that Father had died in Auschwitz on 10 August 1942.

My Discoveries

In 1983, it was over 40 years since my father had been deported to Auschwitz, and I had the feeling that he'd never existed. All that changed when I received a copy of the book *Memorial to the Jews Deported from France, 1942–1944* by Serge Klarsfeld. This listed the names of about 76,000 people, and the convoys on which they were taken to the camps.

Father was deported on Convoy No. 5 on 28 June 1942, and arrived at Auschwitz two days later. The book reveals that this convoy left Beaune-la-Rolande with 1,004 men and 34 women. Father was one of 73 men who had been arrested in the Orléans area to "fill a quota". As far as is known, there were only 55 survivors at liberation.

In 1997, I made a day's pilgrimage to Auschwitz and had a guided tour. I was amazed at its size, and found it difficult to connect with Father's time there. The sight of piles of shoes and spectacles was very upsetting.

Later, I wrote to Auschwitz Archives (**auschwitz.org**) for more information. They gave me father's number of 43739, and informed me that the Nazis had destroyed his records.

I've also been helped in my research by CERCIL – Musée Mémorial des Enfants du Vél d'Hiv (**www.musee-memorial-cercil.fr**) in Orléans; the *Vélodrome d'Hiver (Vél d'Hiv)* round-up was France's largest deportation of Jews, in Paris in July 1942. The centre gathers information regarding the internment camps of Loiret, and a memorial is dedicated to the thousands of children who were detained there.

TV Surprise

Earlier this year, I was watching a TV documentary called *Vichy and the Nazis* on PBS America (**pbsamerica.co.uk/series/vichy-and-the-nazis/**), about the government of Vichy France that collaborated with the Nazis, when I saw my mother's photographic ID card on screen. I had given a copy to CERCIL, which must be how the programme-makers found it. I was so surprised – the chance of it appearing seemed so remote.

PBS America sends out an email newsletter to its viewers, and I was able to include a tribute to Mother in one of the editions.

You can catch up with *Vichy and the Nazis* on Freeview Play and Amazon Fire until 19 December

Resources

Arnold found a museum and two books especially helpful

BOOKS

Les Sabot Rouges
Jean Joubert
Grasset & Fasquelle, 1979
The author witnessed the arrest of Joseph Kremenstein, and described it in his book.

Memorial to the Jews Deported from France, 1942–1944
Serge Klarsfeld
Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 1983
This volume lists the people on 86 convoys from France.

MUSEUM

CERCIL
a **45 rue du Bourdon Blanc, 45000 Orléans, France**
t 02 38 420391
e *cercil@memorialdelashoah.org*
w **www.musee-memorial-cercil.fr**
CERCIL – Musée Mémorial des Enfants du Vél d'Hiv preserves the history of the Loiret camps.

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CRUISE COLLECTIVE

Cruise Collective is a place for people who love the adventure of cruising. Join for free and you'll have access to insider knowledge, incredible competition prizes and exclusive deals like the ones highlighted below. Sign up today at www.cruise-collective.com

20% Avanti discount

Get peace of mind when you travel with 20% off Avanti Travel Insurance for Cruise Collective members. You'll be protected both before you go away, as well as when you're on your trip. And if something does go wrong, Avanti will always aim to help you put it right as soon as possible.

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APH, voted Best Airport Parking Company for the past twelve years, offer customer parking options at airports throughout the UK and at Southampton and Dover ports. Cruise Collective members get 15% off APH-branded airport car parks and up to 10% off other car parks.

15% off Cruise Maps

Create your own unique piece of art commemorating your holiday with The Cruise Maps, crafted with precision using AIS data from your ship. Create personalised framed or unframed prints, perfect as a keepsake. Enjoy free delivery and an exclusive 15% discount as a Cruise Collective member.

The timber-framed buildings of Church Lane in Ledbury

AROUND BRITAIN

Herefordshire

Jonathan Scott reveals the latest online resources, plus plans for a new museum

Herefordshire is a landlocked, largely rural county in the West Midlands, with the Malvern Hills running along the eastern border with Worcestershire and the Black Mountains rising to the west, while the River Wye snakes through its central lowlands. The largest settlement is Hereford, followed by Leominster, Ross-on-Wye and Ledbury.

Agriculture, tourism and brewing remain the county's dominant industries. Its most famous export is cider – Westons Cider is based in Much Marcle, while Bulmers runs the world's largest cider factory in Hereford, which since 1975 has been home to the world's largest cider vat.

Although Herefordshire is not known for manufacturing, there are several exceptions in Hereford alone. Special Metals Wiggin produces nickel alloys here while Painter Brothers makes electricity pylons and masts, and during the Second World War Barronia Metals relocated to the city from London, making valves for the Royal Air Force in relative safety.

Online Resources

Lots of resources such as census material are online, but you will have to do some leg work to find parish records. Findmypast, for example, has an index of county baptisms at **search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/herefordshire-baptisms**, mainly made up of data from the Leintwardine History Society (**leintwardinehs.wordpress.com**) together with the International Genealogical Index on FamilySearch (**familysearch.org**), with good coverage for Hereford and Ross-on-Wye. Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) too has lots of collections that include Herefordshire, but very few that are unique to the county.

Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre (HARC; **herefordshire.gov.uk/herefordshire-archive-records-centre**) looks after records of nearly 250 Herefordshire parishes, as well as several outside the county such as Old Radnor, Presteigne and Discoed in Powys, and Dixton

GETTY IMAGES

Free Online Records

An index of prisoners, directories, a database of 19th-century landowners, burial registers and Bishops' Transcripts make up this month's essential selection

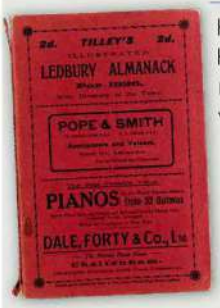
Bishops' Transcripts

w **tinyurl.com/fs-here-bts**

FamilySearch has Bishops' Transcripts of christening, marriage and burial entries (1583–1898). You can view images from a Family History Center or affiliate library.

Directories

w **tinyurl.com/here-his-dir**



Herefordshire History's digital resources include various trade directories for Hereford, as well as an electoral register from 1931 and many volumes of Tilley's Ledbury Almanack. Several more local directories can be found at Special Collections Online: **tinyurl.com/sco-here**.

Landowners Database

w **tinyurl.com/htt-srch**

At Herefordshire Through Time you can search landowners and field names, mainly from 19th-century tithe maps.

Prisoners' Index

w **tinyurl.com/harc-prisoners**

Via this free index published on the Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre's website you can search for inmates held in Herefordshire prisons (1849–1915).

Burials Register

w **tinyurl.com/here-hist-burials**

Herefordshire History also has digitised registers of cemetery burials from Hereford.

and Wyesham in Monmouthshire. Registers of baptisms, marriages, burials and banns are available in microfilm format, and the archive also holds parochial records such as churchwardens' accounts, overseers' accounts, vestry minutes, and records of both settlement and bastardy.

HARC is the record office for the Diocese of Hereford which covers parishes in Herefordshire, South Shropshire, and parts of Worcestershire, Monmouthshire and Powys. This means you can also find Bishops' Transcripts here, which are available to search remotely via **familysearch.org/search/collection/3155913**.

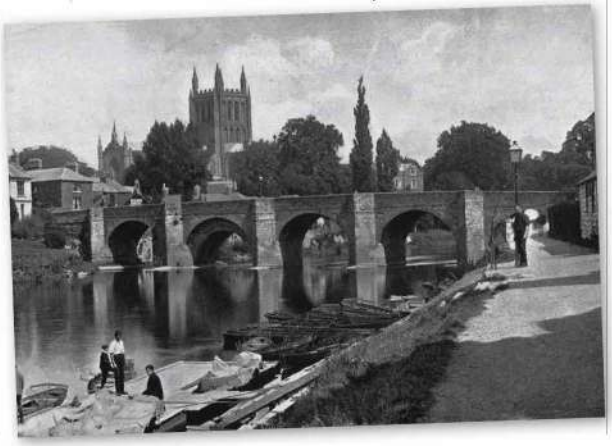
Other diocesan sources include court books, marriage bonds and allegations, tithe maps and apportionments, and wills, all available on microfilm. There's an online index to about 77,000 wills at **herefordshire.gov.uk/herefordshire-archive-records-centre/wills-search**.

Much of the data has been transcribed from act books, which contained a summary record of each grant, including the names of the testator and executor(s), the parish they were from, the value of each estate, and the date of the probate grant. In some cases, these act books are the only surviving references to wills that have since been lost.

The images are a visual record of the largely Polish expatriate community

Senior archivist Rhys Griffith says that there have been several new arrivals since our last visit to the region in January 2021. One important acquisition was a collection of hundreds of photos depicting life on the Foxley housing estate just outside Hereford, from 1947 until its closure in 1955. Foxley started out as a Second World War resettlement camp, mainly for Polish refugees.

This photograph of Hereford Cathedral and the Wye Bridge dates from c1900



GETTY IMAGES

Celebrating Polish Migrants

"The images are an intimate and detailed visual record of the largely Polish expatriate community engaged in a huge variety of events, from traditional weddings and christenings to everyday scenes such as a pet goat and the first car owner in the camp. The photographer was Zbigniew Pawlowicz

whose extraordinary journey had brought him from Vilnius, formerly in Poland, through captivity by both Nazi and Soviet forces," Rhys says.

The archive service is currently supporting the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, in a project exploring the "lives and concerns of ordinary people in the Diocese of Hereford during the late 16th century". Rhys explains, "The university's historians Dr Frank Klaassen and Dr Sharon Wright have photographed dozens of volumes recording, in a cryptic hand, the cases brought by individuals against each other. They provide a rich picture of life, including community tensions, travel and mobility, marriage, and everyday tasks from doing laundry to tending crops and animals."

TOP TIP!

Act books often contain details of grants of probate where the original documents have been lost. They can be searched on the county archive's site at **tinyurl.com/harc-wills**.

Digital copies of cases, together with transcriptions and translations, are starting to appear on the university's web page 'Selected Depositions from the Court of the Bishop of Hereford 1597–1601' at **depositions.drc.usask.ca/node/1** (click 'Causes' in the menu bar), and many more examples will eventually appear. "The new resource is both a window on a lost world and an invaluable guide for researchers wrestling with the interpretation of these challenging documents."

Historic Maps

In addition, HARC has recently secured a volume of rare and beautifully executed 17th-century maps, partially funded by the Arts Council England/Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Grant Fund, the Friends of the Nations' Libraries and local group the Friends of Herefordshire Archives (**fhas.org.uk**). "Surveyor William Hill drew them and assembled the accompanying surveys between 1680 and 1685. They depict the manor of Pembridge Castle in Welsh Newton, and are very early examples of paper maps. The maps are now reunited with a William Hill map and survey from the same series."

Hereford Museum and Art Gallery on Broad Street is currently closed as a multimillion-pound transformation takes place (**herefordshire.gov.uk/history-lives/hereford-museums-art-gallery/2**). Collections have been put into storage, and a pair of 4th-century Kenchester mosaics installed in 1927 have been removed.

Broad Street, Hereford, c1880

GETTY IMAGES

Thanks to funding from the council (£8.4 million), the National Lottery Heritage Fund (£5.08 million), the Government's Towns Fund (£5 million) and Arts Council England (£0.75 million), there will be new permanent galleries and temporary exhibition spaces, topped by a viewing beacon and roof terrace. The museum will showcase key collections such as the Herefordshire Hoard of Viking-era coins and jewellery, and the Woolhope Club room will be restored. The club (**woolhopeclub.org.uk**) has been studying the county's history, natural history and geology since 1851.

Finally Hereford's Shirehall, which opened in 1817, has one of Britain's oldest courtrooms. The building has been closed to the public since a partial ceiling collapse in 2020, but is also undergoing a major refurbishment that will see it house a new city library and learning centre. In the meantime Hereford Library can be found in the Town Hall.

LOCAL INDUSTRY

Cider **Did any of your Herefordshire forebears work in cider production?**

Inside Bulmers' cider mill in Plough Lane, Hereford, c1959

Herefordshire has long been associated with cider. The most famous company, Bulmers, was founded by Percy Bulmer in Hereford in 1887 when he first pressed apples from the orchard at his father's rectory, and would soon expand to completely dominate the local trade. The county archive has material relating to the firm – you can search the catalogue at **archive-catalogue.herefordshire.gov.uk** – while some surviving production and staff records are held at the Museum of Cider in Hereford (**cidermuseum.co.uk**). Its archive is available by appointment.

DIRECTORY

ARCHIVES & LIBRARIES

Herefordshire Archive And Records Centre

a **Fir Tree Lane, Rotherwas, Hereford HR2 6LA**
t 01432 260750
e *archives@herefordshire.gov.uk*
w **herefordshire.gov.uk/herefordshire-archive-records-centre**

Here you will find material relating to the Diocese of Hereford, including Church of England parishes, as well as records of local government, courts, hospitals, estates, schools and businesses. You can search the online catalogue, local-history catalogue and various indexes at **herefordshire.gov.uk/herefordshire-archive-records-centre/visit-herefordshire-archive-records-centre**.

Hereford Cathedral Library And Archives

a **5 College Cloisters, Hereford HR1 2NG**
t 01432 374225/374226
e *library@herefordcathedral.org*
w **https://www.herefordcathedral.org/archives**

The cathedral's history and that of its property is documented back to the 12th century, including title deeds, accounts, manorial and ecclesiastical court records, plus records of the cathedral's two almshouses, St Ethelbert's Hospital, Hereford, and St Katherine's Hospital, Ledbury.

Hereford Library

a **10 St Owen Street, Hereford HR1 2PJ**
t 01432 383600
e *herefordlibrary@herefordshire.gov.uk*
w **herefordshire.gov.uk/libraries**

Hereford Library, which holds the main local-studies collection for the county, has just moved into the city's Town Hall, where it will stay until September 2026 while the Shirehall is renovated.

National Library Of Wales

a **Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 3BU**
t 01970 632800
e *enquiry@library.wales*
w **library.wales**

NLW holds probate records for wills proved in the Archdeaconry of Brecon.

GROUPS & SOCIETIES

Forest Of Dean Family History Trust

w **forest-of-dean.net**

The trust provides free research tools and indexes covering the Forest of Dean and its borders. Highlights include census indexes for 1841 and 1861, as well as workhouse and parish records. You will need to register to search the databases.

Friends Of Herefordshire Archives

w **fhas.org.uk**

Here you can read about projects including the conservation of glass-plate negatives and a crumbling farm day book.

Herefordshire Family History Society

w **herefordshirefhs.org.uk**

The society runs meetings via Zoom on the third Friday of the month. The group has completed its survey of memorial inscriptions in the county, and members receive the quarterly journal *Herefordiensis*.

Longtown & District Historical Society

w **ldhs.org.uk**

The society has been running a project to seek out and summarise wills and probate documents relating to Ewyas Lacy. Also try the Ewyas Lacy Study Group: **ewyaslacy.org.uk**.

The Woolhope Club

w **woolhopeclub.org.uk**

The Woolhope Club was founded in 1851 and focuses on Herefordshire's history, natural history and geology.

MUSEUMS

Hereford Museum And Art Gallery

a **Broad Street, Hereford HR4 9AU**
t 01432 260692
e *herefordmuseums@herefordshire.gov.uk*
w **herefordshire.gov.uk/history-lives/hereford-museums-art-gallery/2**

Note that the museum, which opened in 1874, is closed for refurbishment. The Museum Resource And Learning Centre, the storage facility for the county's collections at 55 Friars Street (**bit.ly/here-museums**), is also currently closed.

Herefordshire Light Infantry Museum

a **Suvla Barracks, Harold Street, Hereford HR1 2QX**
t 07726 566602
e *hfdlimuseum@gmail.com*
w **herefordshirelightinfantrymuseum.com**

As well as the Herefordshire Light Infantry, this museum tells the story of the Herefordshire Regiment and the Herefordshire Rifle Volunteers. Visits must be arranged in advance.

Museum Of Cider

a **Pomona Place, Hereford HR4 0EF**
t 01432 354207
e *enquiries@cidermuseum.co.uk*
w **cidermuseum.co.uk**

The museum preserves books, documents, images, maps and oral histories. The archive is open by appointment only (email *collections@cidermuseum.co.uk* to make a booking).

WEBSITE

Herefordshire History

w **herefordshirehistory.org.uk**

Some local newspapers, photographs and old maps are available via this Herefordshire Library Service website.

GETTY IMAGES

A Rochdale co-op's flyer, 1869

Jane Donaldson from the Co-operative Heritage Trust shares a flyer from a pioneering Victorian co-operative organisation in Rochdale Interview By Rosemary Collins

Consumers' co-operatives – businesses owned and managed by their customers – in the UK have their origins in the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society (REPS), which opened a shop in the town in Greater Manchester on 21 December 1844 to help members cope with the stresses of the Industrial Revolution. To mark the 180th anniversary of the shop's opening, Jane Donaldson, archivist at the Co-operative Heritage Trust, is sharing a document from its collections – a flyer that illustrates the REPS's role in promoting education.

Education for members was at the heart of the co-operative movement

Can You Tell Me More About The Flyer?

This flyer from the REPS Educational Department advertises free lectures and entertainment available to members and the public from November 1869 to March 1870. It was a chance to learn about various subjects, take part in discussions and learn about co-operation.

Education for members was at the heart of the co-operative movement and one of the original principles developed by the REPS that remains with us today. The Pioneers allocated a percentage of the profits towards education, and took over the top floor of the shop as a reading room and lecture hall. Most other co-ops also had a room or a hall for learning and enjoyment. In 1867 the REPS expanded to a Central Premises just up the road from the shop with a dedicated library, reading room and lecture theatre.

Who Founded The REPS?

The 1840s were difficult times for working people: unemployment, short-term jobs and wage cuts, paired with increasing food prices, led to poverty for many. Food was often adulterated, for example chalk was used to dilute flour.

In August 1844, a group of 28 Rochdale workers met to form a co-operative society. Several of the Pioneers were flannel weavers, and most were Chartists or socialists. They saw co-operation as the best way forward to give ordinary people control of their own organisation, with all members having an equal share in the decision-making and receiving a fair share of the profits. They named their co-op the 'Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers', and each of the members pledged money towards it.

When they had raised £28 they were ready to go into business. However, private shopkeepers were worried about the idea of working people setting up their own store, so it was difficult for the Pioneers to find the right premises. " Also you can find this magazine on s a n e t . s t ". Eventually, a local property owner agreed to rent them the ground floor of a woollen warehouse at 31 Toad Lane, Rochdale, where they established a store selling basic goods. The building now houses the Rochdale Pioneers Museum.

Theirs was not the first co-op but they were the first to come up with a set of principles, to run one successfully for the benefit of the members and to establish a 'co-op law' to create solidarity in the movement. The 'Rochdale Model' became the foundation for other co-ops and through various mergers the business became the Co-op Group, the UK's biggest retail co-op.

The society's rule book includes a segment entitled Law First. The key elements were later summarised as the Rochdale Principles, and are still used (although updated) by co-ops around the world.

What Topics Did The Lectures Cover?

The REPS Educational Department focused on two types of education: elementary education and basic skills for adults, and a more sophisticated opportunity to engage in free-thinking debate. The lectures focused on the second part, with lectures about reform such as 'The Beneficial Influences of True Co-Operation' and 'National Education As It Is, and As It Ought To Be', and talks exploring history, geography and etymology.

The first lecture was chaired by JTW Mitchell, a co-operator and activist who became the chair of the REPS in 1857 and later president of the Co-operative Wholesale Society. Other speakers include Rev WN Molesworth, priest and historian from Spotland near Rochdale; John Holmes, a campaigner for workers' rights; and Liberal MP Auberon Herbert, supporter of the 1870 Elementary Education Act.

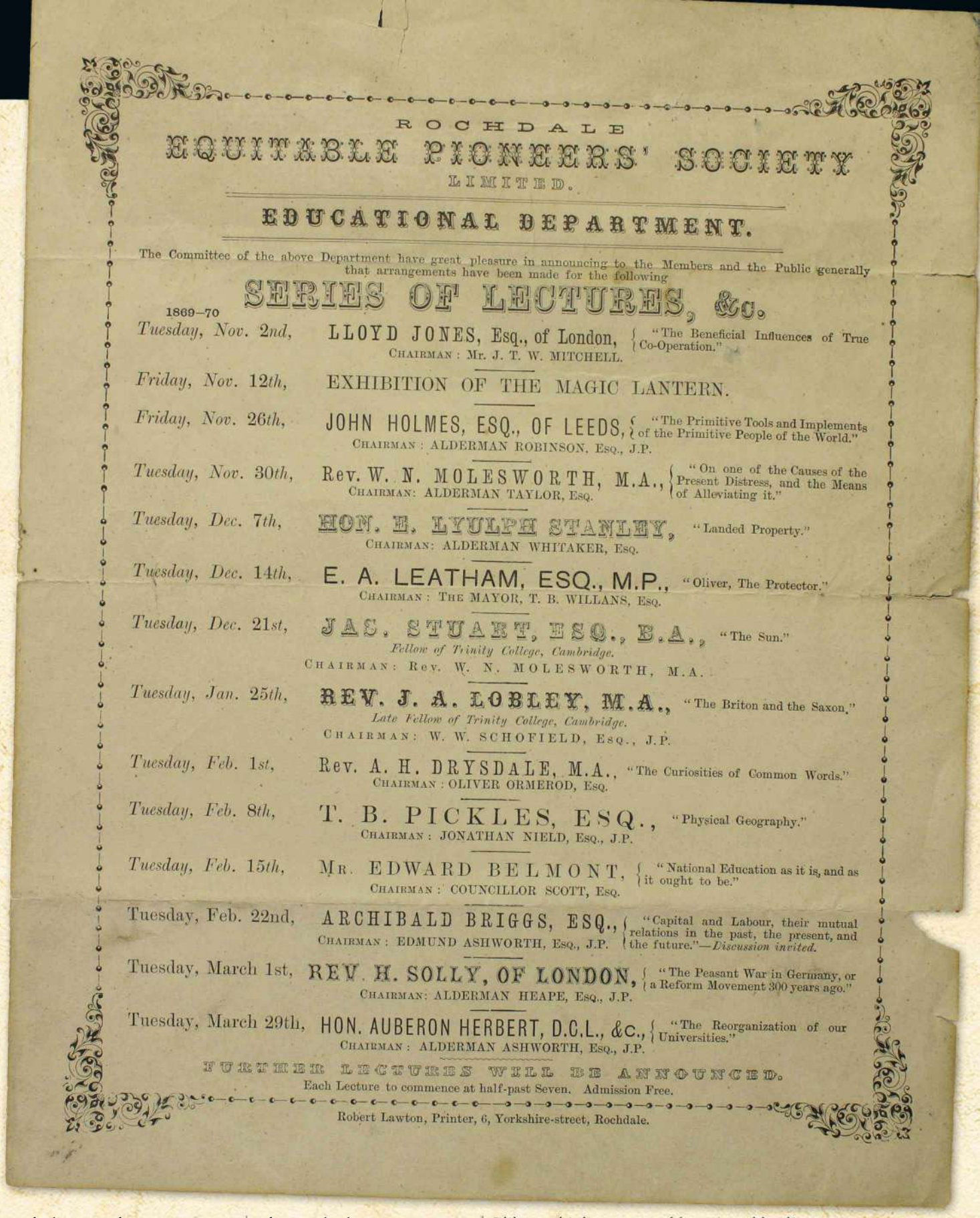
Why Did You Choose This Document As Your Gem?

I chose the flyer because it highlights the importance

Visit Us

The Co-operative Heritage Trust's Archive
a Holyoake House, Hanover Street, Manchester M60 0AS
e *archive@heritagetrust.coop*
w **co-operativeheritage.coop/visit-the-archive**

The trust holds the records of the co-operative movement in the UK. The archive is open Wednesday to Friday, 10am–4pm (booking required at least a week in advance via the online form or email). Staff will also carry out remote research for a fee.



ROCHDALE

EQUITABLE PIONEERS' SOCIETY

LIMITED.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT.

The Committee of the above Department have great pleasure in announcing to the Members and the Public generally that arrangements have been made for the following

SERIES OF LECTURES, &c.

1869–70

Tuesday, Nov. 2nd, LLOYD JONES, Esq., of London, "The Beneficial Influences of True Co-Operation."
CHAIRMAN: Mr. J. T. W. MITCHELL.

Friday, Nov. 12th, EXHIBITION OF THE MAGIC LANTERN.

Friday, Nov. 26th, JOHN HOLMES, ESQ., OF LEEDS, "The Primitive Tools and Implements of the Primitive People of the World."
CHAIRMAN: ALDERMAN ROBINSON, ESQ., J.P.

Tuesday, Nov. 30th, Rev. W. N. MOLESWORTH, M.A., "On one of the Causes of the Present Distress, and the Means of Alleviating it."
CHAIRMAN: ALDERMAN TAYLOR, ESQ.

Tuesday, Dec. 7th, HON. E. LYULPH STANLEY, "Landed Property."
CHAIRMAN: ALDERMAN WHITAKER, ESQ.

Tuesday, Dec. 14th, E. A. LEATHAM, ESQ., M.P., "Oliver, The Protector."
CHAIRMAN: THE MAYOR, T. B. WILLANS, ESQ.

Tuesday, Dec. 21st, JAS. STUART, ESQ., B.A., "The Sun."
Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.
CHAIRMAN: Rev. W. N. MOLESWORTH, M.A.

Tuesday, Jan. 25th, REV. J. A. LOBLEY, M.A., "The Briton and the Saxon."
Late Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.
CHAIRMAN: W. W. SCHOFIELD, ESQ., J.P.

Tuesday, Feb. 1st, Rev. A. H. DRYSDALE, M.A., "The Curiosities of Common Words."
CHAIRMAN: OLIVER ORMEROD, ESQ.

Tuesday, Feb. 8th, T. B. PICKLES, ESQ., "Physical Geography."
CHAIRMAN: JONATHAN NIELD, ESQ., J.P.

Tuesday, Feb. 15th, MR. EDWARD BELMONT, "National Education as it is, and as it ought to be."
CHAIRMAN: COUNCILLOR SCOTT, ESQ.

Tuesday, Feb. 22nd, ARCHIBALD BRIGGS, ESQ., "Capital and Labour, their mutual relations in the past, the present, and the future."—*Discussion invited.*
CHAIRMAN: EDMUND ASHWORTH, ESQ., J.P.

Tuesday, March 1st, REV. H. SOLLY, OF LONDON, "The Peasant War in Germany, or a Reform Movement 300 years ago."
CHAIRMAN: ALDERMAN HEAPE, ESQ., J.P.

Tuesday, March 29th, HON. AUBERON HERBERT, D.C.L., &c., "The Reorganization of our Universities."
CHAIRMAN: ALDERMAN ASHWORTH, ESQ., J.P.

FURTHER LECTURES WILL BE ANNOUNCED.

Each Lecture to commence at half-past Seven. Admission Free.

Robert Lawton, Printer, 6, Yorkshire-street, Rochdale.

of education for co-op members who were mainly working class. It wasn't just about learning basic skills and how to run a shop, but also provided a chance to engage in debate and to learn about social issues at home and abroad. This continues through the work of not only the Co-operative Heritage Trust but also the Co-operative College in Manchester (**co-op.ac.uk**) and the national umbrella body Co-operatives UK (**uk.coop**).

Although no women are listed, they were a big part of the co-op movement and were given voting rights. So I like to think some would have been in the audience.

What Other Documents Are In Your Collection?

We have business records from co-op societies across the UK, correspondence collections of philanthropist Robert Owen (1771–1858) and leading co-operator and writer George Jacob Holyoake (1817–1906), as well as pamphlets, journals, books and photos. We also hold records from the Co-operative Wholesale Society, the Co-operative Party, the Co-operative Women's Guild and the Co-operative Press.

REVIEWS

The latest books on history and genealogy, plus apps, podcasts and websites

Heredis 2025

SOFTWARE

For Windows and macOS

$39.99 Windows ($24.99 upgrade)/$69.99 Mac ($44.99 upgrade); heredis.com/en/

Believe it or not, Heredis turned 30 this year, since computer scientist Bernard David and family historian Sylvette David created the program in 1994. To celebrate the anniversary, Heredis 2025 comes with the promise of 30 "innovations", but don't get too excited. In fact, it's more like 25 – still a notable number – and most are minor new features and improvements.

This is apparent from the moment that you launch the program and find an identical user interface to recent versions, albeit with an extra button here and a tweak to the summary pane there (a handy Tiny Tree showing the individual's immediate family).

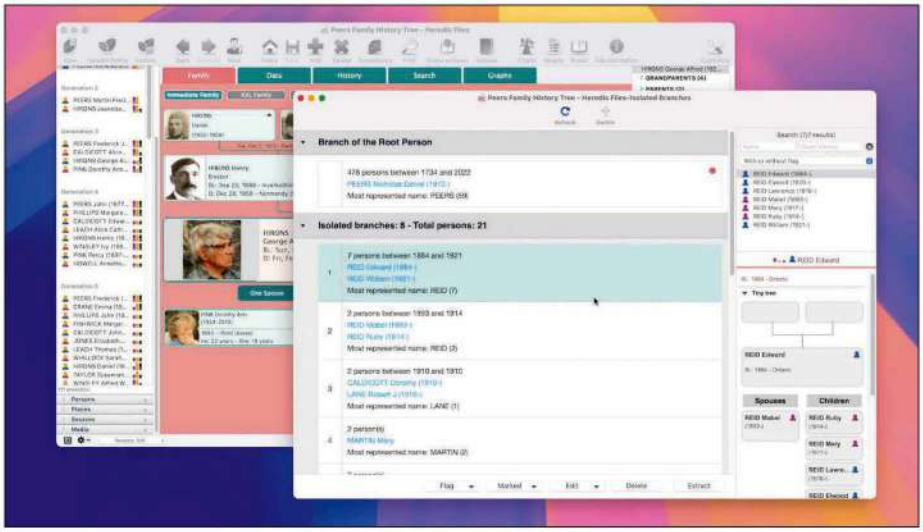
Thankfully, other changes are more tangible, including the headline Flags feature. It's basically a tagging system – not exactly innovative, but it works well. You can build your own set of fully customisable tags to track everything from specific people and characteristics to simple stage markers in your research. These are represented by colour-coded dots, and once set up can be attached to relations, events, media and facts. They're sprinkled liberally throughout the various navigation views, so are easy to spot.

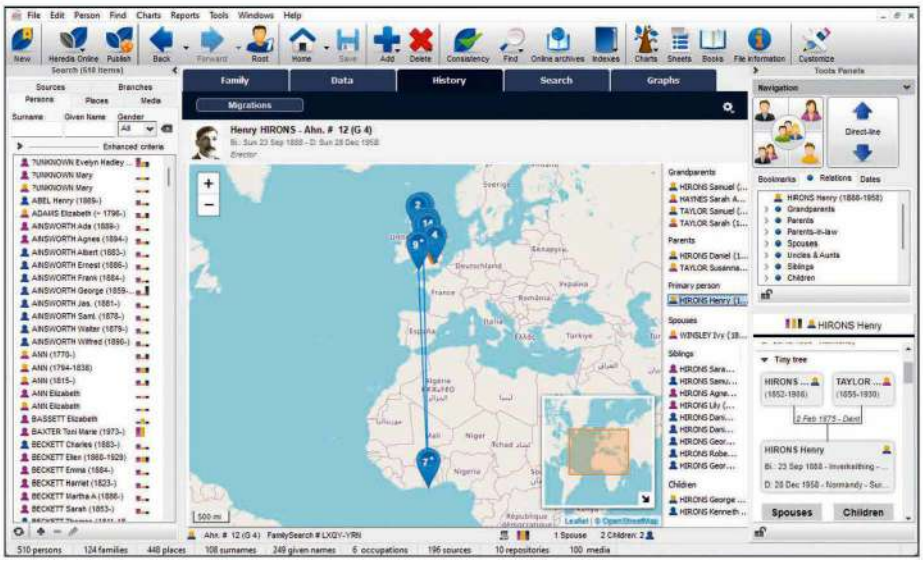
Heredis 2025 also introduces a new Isolated Branches tool, which helps identify those people and families who have been cut off from other relations, in addition to a Birthday Widget listing upcoming birthdays for those who are still alive.

There are lots of incremental changes in the latest version too: for example you can customise your family's status, bulk-process items and even generate new files from the people who are featured in one of Heredis' impressive-looking books.

Our major bugbear remains unaddressed, however: there is still no direct integration with any online archives. Luckily, Heredis 2025 contains just enough good features to make it worth the upgrade, even if it's not quite the major new build it would like you to think it is.

Nick Peers is a family historian and software expert, and writes a regular 'Tech Tips' article for *WDYTYA? Magazine*





Top to bottom: Heredis 2025's flagship new feature is a tags-based system appropriately called Flags; you can now quickly identify isolated branches and individuals in your family tree; one neat (although not new) feature in Heredis is a History view, which enables you to see where your ancestors travelled

DIGITAL PICKS

Rosemary Collins highlights three digital resources that caught our eye this month

WATCH

Home Children

scottisharchives.org.uk/explore/ancestral-tourism/home-children/

Did you know that 7,000 of the British Home Children who were sent to Canada came from Glasgow? Here you can view a pair of webinars from the Scottish Council on Archives – 'The Power of Archives: Finding the Home Children Who Went to Canada' and 'Give Us the Power to Make a Golden Bridge Across the Atlantic – Honouring the Story of Glasgow's Child Migrants'. Free.

PODCAST

A Feminist Family History In Eight Lives

thinkthreeways.com/feminist-family-history-in-eight-lives-the-podcast/

In this series, academic, writer and artist Dr Kate Carruthers Thomas tells the stories of her female ancestors. She starts with her grandmothers in the 20th century and goes back as far as the 17th. Free.

WEBSITE

1924 Portland Tax Records

mainememory.net/search/ptr

In 1924, a tax re-evaluation was carried out in Portland, Maine. The complete tax records document the city's residents at the time, and are accompanied by photos of their houses. The records have now been digitised, and are available to search online – an invaluable resource for anyone who has a family connection to Portland.

Jack And Eve

Two Women In Love And At War

SOCIAL HISTORY

Wendy Moore

Atlantic, 400 pages, £22

Vera Holme (Jack) and Evelina Haverfield (Eve) are the focus of Wendy Moore's rich and detailed exploration of dedicated women who worked tirelessly in support of the soldiers in the First World War.

At first these women joined the suffragettes to fight for women's rights but once the war started, they turned their expertise into setting up women's military-style outfits, offering their efforts to the War Office, who turned them down. Instead, they joined the Scottish Women's Hospitals and went out to Serbia and Russia with a group of other women to help set up the military field hospitals to assist the Allies. Bands of women collected together to form units of doctors, nurses, administrators and drivers working in terrible conditions with inadequate supplies. Eve helped administer to wounded and dying men, and made sure supplies needed for the hospital were found. Jack drove ambulances through rough and often dangerous territory to pick up soldiers.

Moore's accessible descriptions bring these women's experiences to life. She also tells us of the love between the pair, at a time when LGBT relationships weren't widely accepted.

Julie Peakman is a historian who writes about 18th-century culture and sexuality

Reader Review YOUR CHANCE TO ASSESS THE LATEST BOOKS

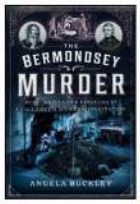
The Bermondsey Murder

Scotland Yard's First Great Challenge & Dickens' Inspiration

VICTORIAN CRIME

Angela Buckley

Pen & Sword, 200 pages, £14.99



From the title, you might think that this book is solely about a single murder: the 1849 killing of customs gauger Patrick O'Connor. However, although that death does form the book's focus, its author Dr Angela Buckley takes the reader into the world of many Victorian crimes and their eventual punishment, using original documents highlighting the demands on the detectives of Scotland Yard, who suffered much criticism from the popular press in the early years of its formation.

The story of the worldwide hunt and prosecution of husband and wife Frederick and Maria Manning for O'Connor's murder went on to inspire Charles Dickens' interest, leading him to further research with many of those involved in solving the case, some of whom he used as the basis for characters in his novel *Bleak House* (serialised 1852–1853).

We find, through Dr Buckley's meticulous research, the background to all the main players' lives, along with a description of how capital punishment was delivered in front of a demanding public who came in large numbers to witness the final chapter in the Mannings' lives.

Clockwise from above left: Patrick O'Connor; detective Charles Field; 3 Minver Place, the scene of the crime

David Swidenbank, Porthcawl
David is an author and local historian who has been researching his tree for over 40 years

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MINVER PLACE – THE PROGRESS OF CRIME OR THE AUTHENTIC MEMOIRS OF MARIE MANNING BY ROBERT HUISH (1849); PUBLIC DOMAIN

TV & RADIO

Jonathan Wright previews upcoming programmes on history and family history

Call The Midwife

BBC One and BBC iPlayer
Christmas Day

Left to right: Angela Turner (Alice Brown), Teddy Turner (Edward Shaw), Dr Patrick Turner (Stephen McGann) and May Tang (April Rae Hoang) celebrate Christmas in two festive *Call the Midwife* episodes

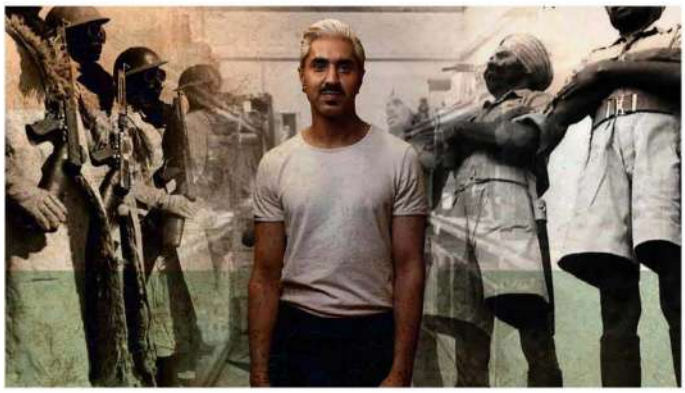
We don't have long to wait until the East End baby wranglers make their traditional festive appearance. This time around, rather than a single feature-length special, we're promised two one-hour episodes and a cliffhanger. "Who doesn't love finding an extra, unexpected present underneath the Christmas tree?" said *Call the Midwife*'s creator and writer Heidi Thomas, when the new episodes were announced.

As for the chronology, the story of the Nonnatus midwives has now reached 1969. Time for the residents of Poplar to prepare for Christmas by staging a carol concert and by heading to a travelling fun fair. Less welcome are cases of 'Hong Kong' flu, a pandemic that the historical record tells us reached Europe in 1968 and lingered long enough for there to be a serious outbreak in the UK over the winter of 1969/1970.

Elsewhere, the locals are worried by a spate of break-ins that, it's feared, may be the work of an escaped prisoner; the younger Turners are excited by a *Blue Peter* appeal calling for Dinky cars and scrap metal; and Miss Higgins' grandson, Harry, makes a visit for Christmas.

We're also promised a mince-pie competition, the Buckles getting set for Reggie's homecoming, and Trixie (Helen George) paying a visit to Nonnatus House. Among the other returning regulars are Judy Parfitt as Sister Monica Joan, Jenny Agutter as Sister Julienne and Stephen McGann as Dr Patrick Turner, but as ever this is very much an ensemble drama.

Looking ahead, a new series will follow in early 2025, and run for eight episodes. The programme has already been renewed for another year, so it will definitely return in 2026 for a 15th series – which is no surprise when you learn that it has been sold to 260 territories around the world.



Mobeen Azhar explores his grandfather's experiences in his new documentary

The Soldiers That Saved Britain

Channel 4
Streaming now

In a documentary broadcast to tie in with Remembrance Day commemorations, journalist and filmmaker Mobeen Azhar tells the story of his grandfather, one of 2.5 million men who served in the British Indian Army during the Second World War. It's a journey into the past that takes him to rural Scotland, where a unit of Indian troops served during the conflict, and Egypt, where Azhar learns about the brutal conditions that soldiers faced.

Recurring questions run throughout the film. Why did so many men from the subcontinent fight for a colonising power? Why is their part in the conflict so underappreciated? And why isn't there a proper memorial to the British Indian Army troops, who stood against fascism and totalitarianism so bravely?

The Gift

BBC Radio 4 and BBC Sounds
Wednesday 4 December

If you receive a DNA test kit for Christmas, it may be worth considering the possible consequences of finding out more about your genetic inheritance. That's the recurring lesson of *The Gift*, in which Jenny Kleeman follows the stories of those who have made unexpected discoveries after uploading their test results to the DNA databases held by companies such as Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) and the troubled 23andMe (**23andme.com**).

The first episode of this returning series, which began in November and is on BBC Sounds, gives a fair idea of what to expect. It follows the tale of a DNA test taken because a golf game was rained off, the results of which eventually involved a man and three women radically reassessing what they thought they knew about their families.

The second episode goes deeper into the story as Kleeman meets 'Claire', a 50-something mother and grandmother forced to confront the idea that she was swapped at birth in hospital.

History's Youngest Heroes

BBC Radio 4 and BBC Sounds
Monday 9 December

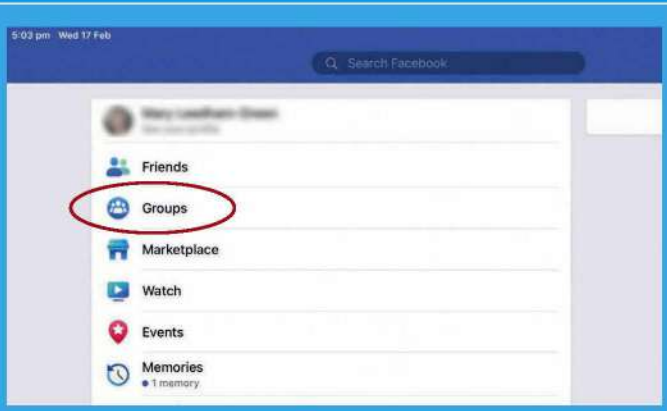
In a companion series to *History's Secret Heroes*, Nicola Coughlan of *Bridgerton* and *Derry Girls* fame tells the stories of those who, despite being of tender years, made a difference. The series kicks off with Nelson Mandela, whose fight against apartheid in South Africa began in his youth. Highlights of the other episodes include future Hollywood star Audrey Hepburn supporting the Dutch resistance during the Second World War, and how a childhood accident in which he lost his sight led to a teenaged Louis Braille inventing the reading and writing system that bears his name in the 1820s.

BBC/NEAL STREET PRODUCTIONS/OLLY COURTENAY / CHANNEL 4

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

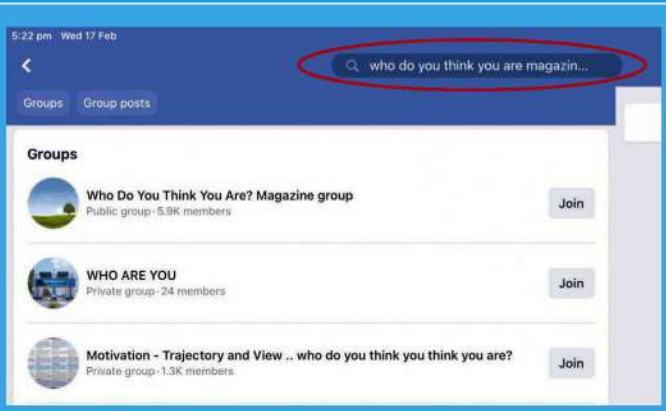
Join Our FACEBOOK GROUP

Did you know that we have a friendly Facebook Group where family historians can share new discoveries, ask for help or just chat about genealogy? If you haven't joined a Facebook Group before, don't worry, it's very simple!



1 Click On The 'Groups' Icon

From the Facebook homepage, click on the 'Groups' icon (this may be at the bottom of the screen on the mobile app or from the menu, or above your News Feed).

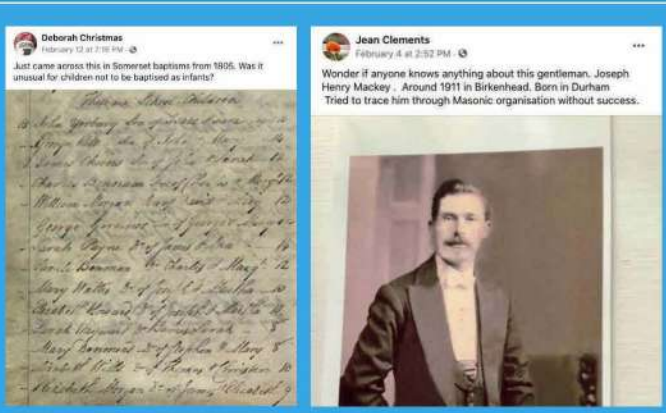


2 Search For Our Group

Search for the *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* Group (click the magnifying glass), then click 'Join' next to the name. You will need to read and agree to our rules.

3 Wait To Be Added

We are then notified, and will add you as a member as soon as possible. The group is growing rapidly, but you shouldn't have to wait too long before you're approved.

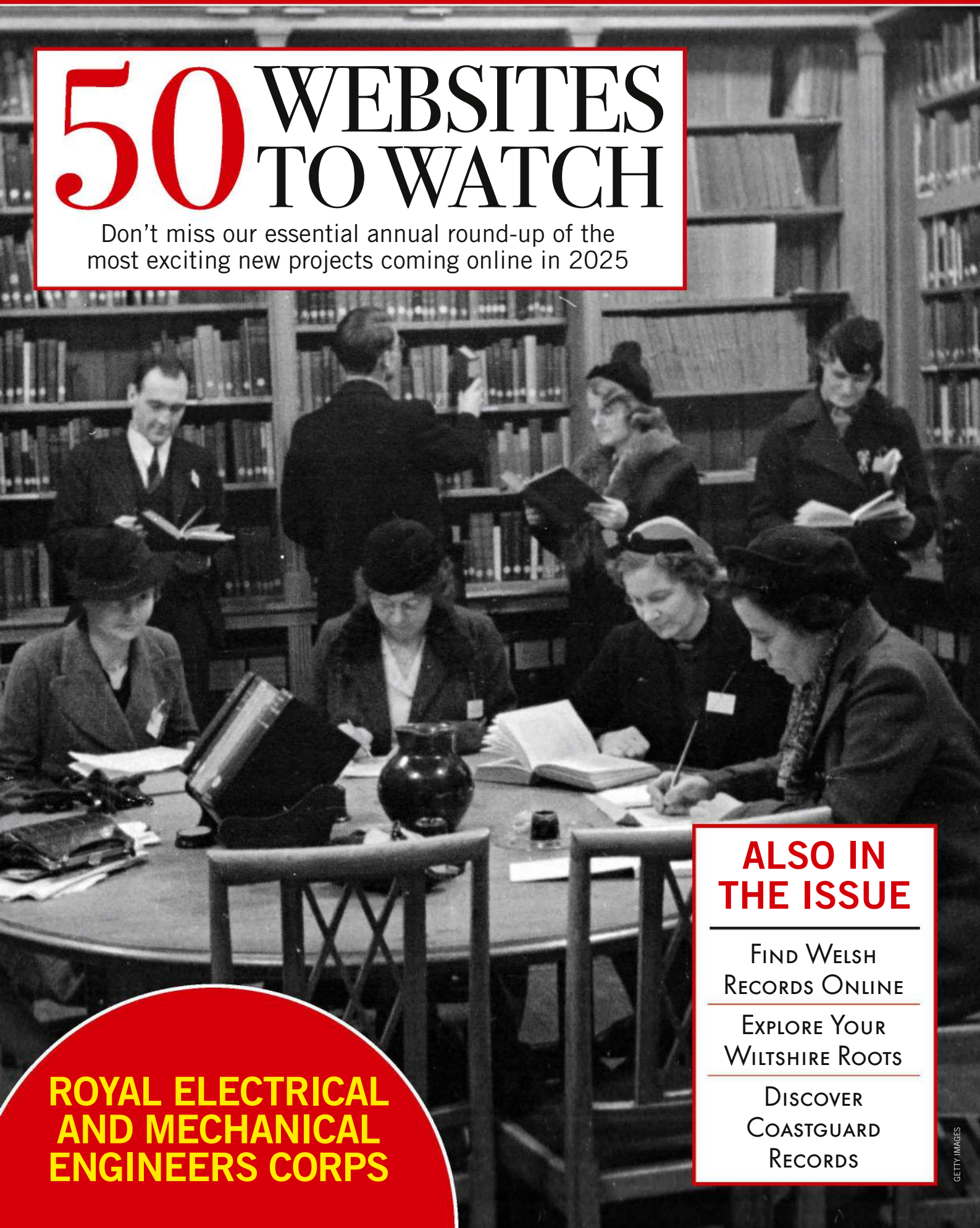


4 Start Posting!

You can either upload your own query or respond to other people's posts. It's a great way to share your love of family history and get help with your brick walls.

NEXT MONTH

Our January issue goes on sale on **31 December**



50 WEBSITES TO WATCH

Don't miss our essential annual round-up of the most exciting new projects coming online in 2025

ROYAL ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERS CORPS

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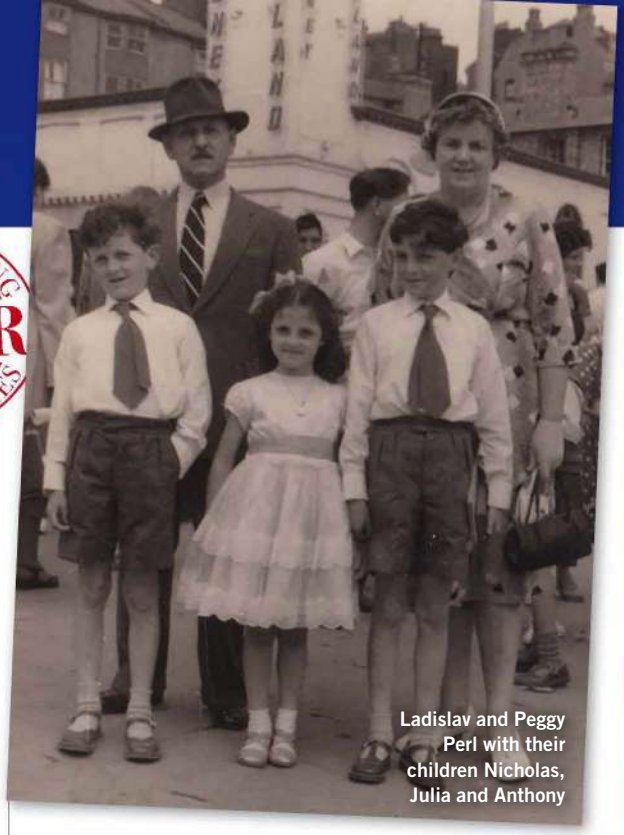
'My Family Escaped The Communists'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

Becca Perl is amazed by her grandparents and father's daring flight from postwar Czechoslovakia. By **Gail Dixon**



Ladislav and Peggy Perl with their children Nicholas, Julia and Anthony

The year is 1949, and a couple with an infant struggle to navigate their way through dense pine forest on the border of Czechoslovakia and West Germany. They are tired, hungry and terrified of being caught by police patrols. Worst of all, they're also lost.

These desperate people were Ladislav Perl, his wife Margaret – known as Peggy – and their son Anthony, whose daughter Becca is fascinated by her grandparents' bravery and determination.

"Dad told me about their escape when I was a child, but the story felt a long way away from me," says Becca. "It wasn't until I was older that I appreciated the magnitude of what they did."

Ladislav Perl was born in 1910 in Topol'čianky, Czechoslovakia, to Jewish parents. He joined the Czech Army in 1933, and after Germany invaded his homeland in 1939 he fought in France. Ladislav was awarded three Czechoslovak War Crosses for gallantry during wartime.

France fell to the Nazis in June 1940 and Ladislav was evacuated to England where he met Peggy McDonough, who was from Middlesbrough. The couple married in October 1945 and moved to the town of Moravská Třebová in Czechoslovakia, where Ladislav was promoted to lieutenant colonel. Anthony was born there in 1948.

Life became increasingly difficult for the family under communist rule. Ladislav displayed resistance to communism, and another officer tipped him off that he was in grave danger and must escape. If arrested, he could be interrogated under torture and imprisoned for many years – or worse.

"One day in July 1949, they left their home for ever. Ladislav forged documents authorising him to use an official car and they told their maid, whom they believed to be a spy, that they were taking Anthony to see a doctor in a town some distance away. They had to leave all of their belongings behind, which I found heartbreaking.

"They packed a small bag with only baby essentials, Ladislav's medals and his army revolver loaded with three bullets. They agreed that if they were caught Ladislav would shoot Peggy, then Anthony, then himself. I can't imagine the terror they must have felt to agree to such a plan.

"Keeping their cool through checkpoints, they left the car on the edge of a forest near the West German border and set off on foot. After a day and night of walking they got lost, and had to ask some woodcutters for help. They let them sleep in their cottage, but they were woken by one of the men who said that the other had gone to betray them.

"They fled into the forest again, and emerged to see a stream with workers on the other side. They confirmed that the stream marked the border with West Germany. Peggy waded through and Ladislav used his last crumb of energy to throw Anthony to her before jumping to freedom."

Peggy and Anthony returned to Middlesbrough, but Ladislav had to stay in a displaced persons' camp before joining them. Peggy worked as a teacher and Ladislav as a clerk, and they had two more children, Nicholas and Julia.

Becca has written and illustrated a children's book based on their escape, *Don't Look Back*. It pays tribute to the courage of her grandparents and displaced people everywhere, and Becca is donating 50p to the Refugee Council for each copy sold.

"All displaced people share the same desperation as my grandparents, and risk their lives to reach a better place. The book is dedicated to my beautiful sons Archie and Joe, as well as my wonderful dad Anthony. I hope I've done his story justice."

Ladislav used his last crumb of energy to throw Anthony to Peggy

BECCA PERL is a journalist, food writer and illustrator who lives with her family in Christchurch, Dorset

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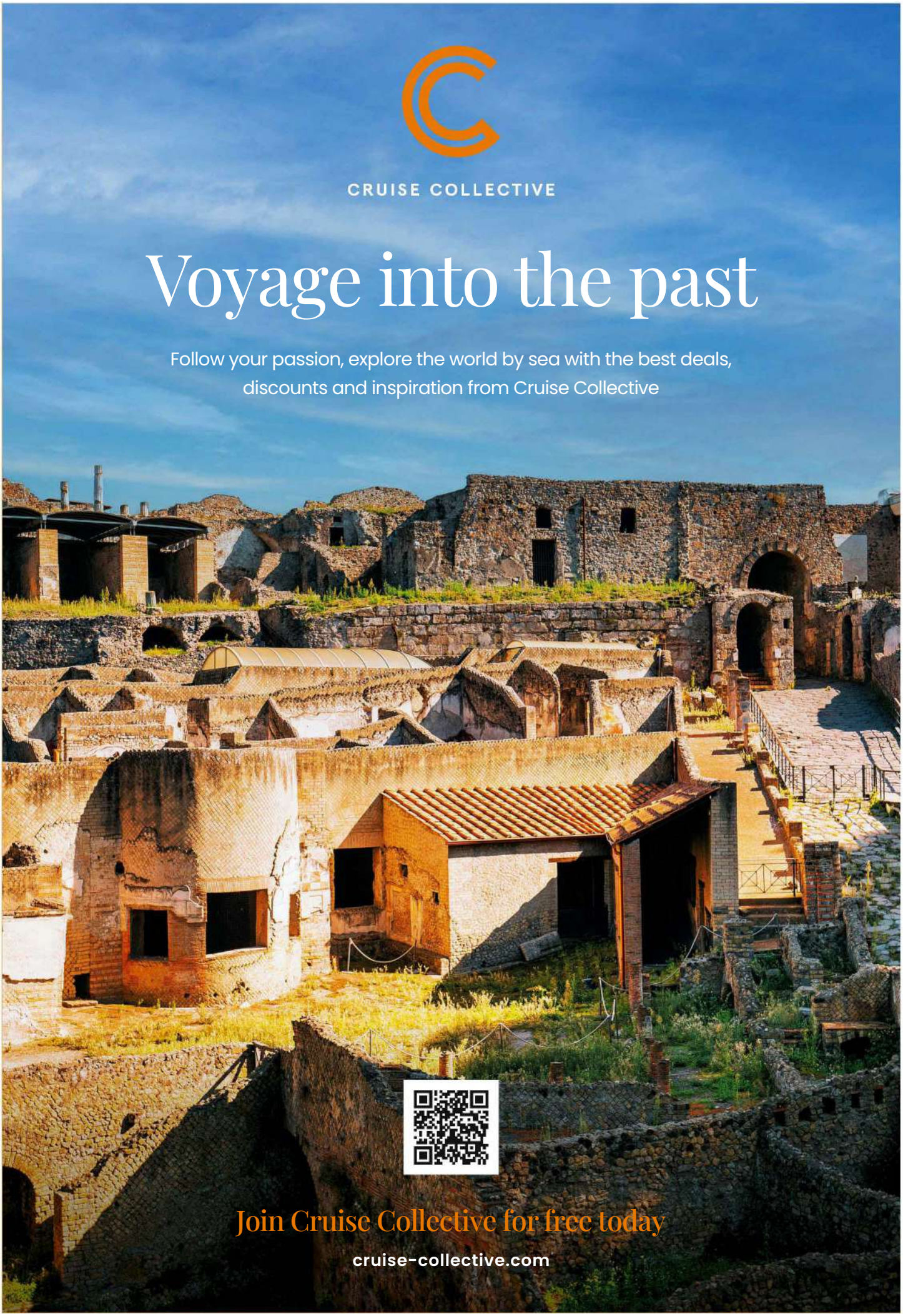
Don't Look Back is published by the Book Guild (RRP £7.99)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